

ROBERT OWEN

A BIOGRAPHY • •

By FRANK PODMORE

Author of "Modern Spiritualism," "Studies
in Psychical Research," etc.

WITH FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS,
TWO PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES, AND FACSIMILES

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ROBERT OWEN

CHAPTER XV

ORRISTON

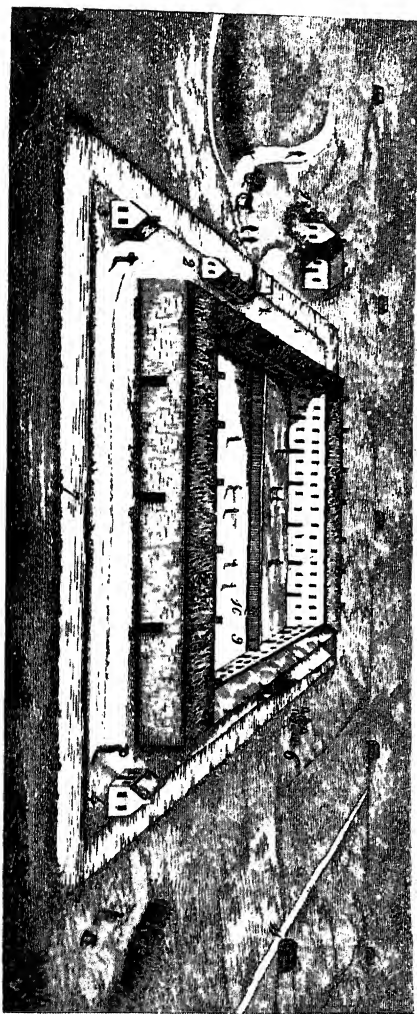
IN narrating the story of New Harmony and the Mexican and Cincinnati episodes we have, in order to follow Owen's personal history, somewhat anticipated the course of events in this country. For two or three years after the publication of the Report to the County of Lanark, Owen's attention appears to have been fully occupied with the abortive scheme of Motherwell, with the proceedings of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society, with his Irish tour, and later with the concerns of New Harmony. With the effect produced by his preaching upon the larger world outside the committee presided over by the Duke of Kent he does not appear to have concerned himself: his trust was still placed in America. Nevertheless in the decade 1820-30 many attempts were made in this country to carry into effect Owen's scheme for a Co-operative Community: these scattered efforts ultimately merging into a popular movement which swept through the country, and has left permanent traces on the organisation of industry even to the present day. The first signs that Owen's propaganda had

really penetrated beyond the small group of wealthy men to whom his preaching was in the first instance addressed made themselves manifest at the beginning of 1821.¹

In January of that year appeared *The Economist*, "a periodical paper," so runs the sub-title, "explanatory of the new system of Society projected by Robert Owen, Esq., and of a plan of association for improving the condition of the working classes during their continuance in their present employments." The editor of the *Economist* was, it will be seen, generally in agreement with Owen's views, though he takes occasion to explain that he does not give complete adhesion to all his master's utterances; and in particular, being himself a Christian, he dissents strongly from Owen's religious opinions.²

¹ In 1818 there was founded at Frederik's Oord in Holland the first of a series of Labour Colonies for providing work for the unemployed. Owen himself repeatedly, in the course of his later life, claimed that the foundation of these Dutch colonies was directly due to his teaching; and his claim has been endorsed by Holyoake and others. I cannot find any justification for the claim. In most of the contemporary references which I have come across to these colonies, no mention is made of Owen (see especially *Quarterly Review*, November, 1829). Moreover, though the Dutch scheme had a general resemblance to Owen's, and in one of the colonies at least the residents were housed in a quadrangle, the aim and methods diverged widely: the Dutch scheme was individualistic. (See Porter, *Progress of the Nation* (1851), p. 116; also *An Account of the Poor Colonies of Holland*. Edinburgh, 1828). The writer, however, of the article "Owen" in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy* favours Owen's claim to have had a share in initiating these Dutch Labour Colonies, and refers to an article in Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* of April 25, 1819, which endorses the claim.

² See editorial signed "Economist," Vol. I., p. 101. The editor and proprietor was one G. Mudie, at that time also editor of the *Sun*. Apparently in his advocacy of Christianity he was guided partly by policy, for in January, 1823, he writes to Owen, "I have been for a long time completely satisfied of the utter falsehood of all religion. . . . I still think it premature, however, to attack it through the medium of the Press" (letter of January 3, 1823, Manchester Collection).



A VIEW OF THE OMMERSHANS AGRICULTURAL WORKHOUSE, HOLLAND.
See note on opposite page.

The pages of the *Economist* are devoted to general discussions of Owen's plans, and to chronicling the history of what is now beginning to take shape as a popular movement : and it is apparent that its readers for the most part belonged to the industrious classes, as Owen himself would have called them.

We hear a good deal in its pages of the project started by Mr. Hamilton of Dalzell, for founding a Community at Motherwell : but there are also notices of Co-operative, that is, generally, Owenite Societies forming or about to be formed. Thus amongst the artificers at Plymouth Docks,¹ and at Newcastle under the auspices of the Society of Friends,² Associations had been formed for the wholesale purchase and distribution of provisions—what we should now call, in fact, Co-operative Stores. At Edinburgh a Society had been formed on a somewhat wider basis, under the direction of Abram Combe. It chose the name of the *Practical* Society ; and its first object was to provide good education for the children of the members, by carrying out Owen's principles as exemplified at New Lanark.³ We have also a brief reference to a Society of Christian Morality recently founded in Paris, which is said by the editor to have been inspired by Owenite principles.⁴

But the most important social experiment chronicled by the *Economist* is that of the "Co-operative and Economical Society." The periodical, indeed, seems

¹ Vol. II., p. 118.

² Vol. I., p. 268.

³ Vol. II., pp. 336, 345.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 381. There is no reference to Owen in the prospectus, and the assertion of Christian Morality in the title makes the alleged parentage at least doubtful.

to have originated with this Society, which ultimately took over the publication, until the final collapse.

On January 22, 1821, six days before the appearance of the *Economist*, a general meeting was held, consisting of printers and a number of outsiders who had been invited to attend, at which the Co-operative and Economical Society was formed. Its "ultimate object"—to quote the constitution¹—was "to establish a village of unity and mutual co-operation combining agriculture, manufactures and trades, upon the plan projected by Robert Owen of New Lanark." As a first step towards the realisation of the project, the Society proposed to secure suitable buildings—if possible, a whole street or square—somewhere in the London suburbs, in which the members might enjoy all the advantages of co-operation in household expenses and the care of their children, whilst still pursuing their ordinary occupations in the world outside. The scheme included the provision of a fund for those sick or out of employment; and Rule X. of the Constitution provided that "on the decease of a member his widow and children become members of the Society, without the payment of admission monies."²

The projectors estimated that by living together under a common roof, buying their own provisions, baking their own bread, brewing their own beer, and making their own boots and clothes, a Society of two hundred and fifty families would effect a saving of about £7,780 a year.³ Pending the issue of a search for

¹ Reprinted in the *Economist*, 1821, Vol. I., p. 203.

² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

suitable dwellings, it was resolved to commence at once the purchase of provisions wholesale, to be retailed to the members at 5 per cent. above cost price, so as to cover expenses.¹ This arrangement appears to have gone on for some months, with great advantage to the members, who were thus enabled to save about 30 per cent. in the cost of provisions. Finally, in the *Economist* of November 17, 1821, we read that the Society has actually taken several houses at the corner of Guildford Street East, Bagnidge Wells Road, Spa Fields, and that two or three families have already gone into residence. In one house there was a large room to be used as a dining and committee room, which would, it is thought, hold one hundred persons.

It was decided, after some discussion, not to adopt a purely communistic basis, *i.e.* not to pool the income of the various families. The present members appear to have been willing to take this step; but it was thought that the adoption of such a measure might deter others from joining. So a fixed charge for maintenance, to include rent, food, washing, and the education of the children, was decided upon. A single man, or a married couple—for the wife, it was held, would repay by her labour the cost of her subsistence—were to pay 14*l.* 6*s.* a week, and a small additional sum for each child, so that a man, wife and five children would pay 21*l.* 6*s.* The women would undertake all the domestic work, and those women who could be spared, together with the elder children, would accept paid work outside the Society, their wages being thrown into a common fund which would serve for the education of the children, and for

¹ *Economist*, Vol. I, p. 234.

the advancement of the communal life. When the children were capable of working five or six hours daily, it was considered that they were paying for their maintenance, and their parents were to be relieved of all expense on their account. Until that time the children were to be a common charge on the Community, and their education its first duty. They were to be duly instructed, it is to be noted, in the principles of Christianity.

The members of the Community were to have a common kitchen, to breakfast and dine in one large room at a common table; to have public rooms for reading and music; common nurseries and dormitories for the children; and generally, all the domestic arrangements were to be worked in combination.

The Society forthwith issued a circular, addressed to the neighbouring nobility and gentry, announcing that they were prepared to execute orders in carving and gilding, boots and shoes, clothes, millinery, umbrellas, hardware, including stoves and kettles, cutlery, painting on velvet, transparent landscape window-blinds, bookbinding, and provisions. They hoped soon to open a school, to which children from the outside would be admitted at a small charge. A laboratory would also be fitted up on the premises for dispensing medicines: periodical visits had been arranged for from a medical man; and it was hoped that a useful register would be kept, including vital statistics of all kinds.

At the end of the first week we learn, from a "Minute of the congregated Families," that the cost of living, in comfort and abundance, had proved to be much less than the contribution exacted from the members.

One of the most notable arrangements of the Co-operative and Economical Society was the institution of monitors. Each member was enjoined to choose a monitor from his fellow-members, and as no monitor might have more than one client, it followed that each member acted as monitor to some other and was himself subject to admonition in turn. The monitor's duty was "to notice to his Appointer such errors of conduct, temper and language as he might from time to time observe, and particularly to admonish him of any fault in his behaviour to all or any of his co-associates, from which danger to the general harmony and mutual esteem and goodwill of the families might be apprehended". If any complaint was made of the conduct of any member, it was the duty of the monitor to investigate and, if needed, to administer reproof. It was expressly provided that no monitor should exercise a vexatious interference, and that no member should seek to evade judgment by retorting a *tu quoque* on his judge.

A scheme of this kind, if patiently and loyally carried out, would, no doubt, do much to remove the inevitable daily occasions for friction in a society of this kind; and it is noteworthy that a similar device has been employed in other communist societies. The Shakers sought the same end by the practice of confession. Noyes in the Oneida Community instituted "criticism" — a far more severe ordeal than the private admonitions of a monitor. For the person undergoing "criticism" at Oneida was set in public in the midst of his friends and neighbours, who were enjoined to use the utmost frankness in telling him of his faults. Nevertheless the

system is reported to have worked well and to have achieved its end.¹

Of the working of the monitorial system at Spa Fields we have no record; for a few weeks after its institution the *Economist* came to an end,² and with it all records of the Society ceased.³ It appears, however, from Mudie's letters, already quoted, that the Society continued to occupy the same premises, though probably no longer as a Community, for about a year longer. He writes (letter of August 25, 1848): "Had a few, or perhaps only one more influential man joined the congregated Society in Spafields, its success would have been assured. During two years while I was chief editor of the *Sun*, I and my family lived there in perfect harmony with twenty-one families of the working classes of London—too small a number to be able to furnish any successful example. Even I was compelled by the proprietors of the *Sun* to give up my residence with the Society, or to forfeit my situation as their editor. I therefore left it, and the congregated members shortly afterwards dispersed." From a letter written from Guildford Street in January, 1823, it appears that Mudie was still carrying on an active propaganda on the system, and continually engaged political economists in debate; but nothing is said about the Society.

Mudie afterwards threw up his post on the *Sun* and went to Orbiston, embarking all his capital—about £1,000—in that ill-fated venture. He quarrelled, however, as he

¹ See *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (Nordhoff), p. 289.

² The last number, appearing *longo intervallo*, is dated March 9, 1822.

³ Southey—who gives a sympathetic account of the Society in his *Colloquies*, Vol. I., p. 132 *seqq.*—attributes its failure to the want of the necessary funds for carrying on so extensive a scheme.

tells us, with Combe's dictatorial pretensions, and was ultimately thrown upon the world wholly destitute of means.

With the collapse of the London Co-operative and Economical Society the popular movement seems to have received a severe set back, and we hear no more of it for the next two or three years. In the meantime, however, Owen's public meetings continued, and he and his wealthy sympathisers continued their efforts to induce the public to subscribe a sum sufficient to buy land and erect substantial buildings, to the end that the industrious, or even the non-industrious, poor might enter in and live in peace and plenty.

We have traced in previous chapters the efforts in this direction made by successive groups of philanthropic persons; and we have seen how ultimately Owen himself, disappointed at the slow progress made in this country, found a theatre for his grand experiment in the New World across the Atlantic. The scheme for a community at Motherwell collapsed with the withdrawal of Owen's support. But the project of founding a village of co-operation was by no means abandoned, and a local habitation was ultimately found within a mile of the spot originally suggested by Hamilton of Dalzell. In its later shape the project was mainly due to the initiation of one Abram Combe; but the site chosen was also on Hamilton's estate, and he throughout co-operated with Combe in the enterprise, embarking all his fortune in it.¹

¹ From letters in the Manchester Collection it appears that in the early spring of 1825 Hamilton wrote to Owen, then in America, that he would like to repurchase the Motherwell Estate. Eventually it was offered to him at the price originally paid for it by Owen, plus interest at 5 per cent — £14,266 (letter from J. Wright to Owen, May 2, 1825). But it does not appear whether the transaction was ever completed. The building at Orbiston was begun in March, 1825.

Abram Combe, brother of the well-known phrenologists, Andrew and George Combe, was born on January 15, 1785. His father was a brewer in Edinburgh, and the boy chose the profession of a tanner, owing to the accidental circumstance that some tanworks adjoined his father's brewery. His parents were strict Calvinists, and young Abram's childhood and youth were spent under the shadow of that grim faith. Six days of the week he was engaged, from morning till evening, first at school, later in serving his apprenticeship to his trade. On Sunday he went twice to church, and for the remainder of the day was confined to his father's garden, occupied in the study of sermons, and the Longer and Shorter Catechism. After a rather dreary and joyless boyhood he went as a young man to London for two years, and ultimately returned to Edinburgh and set up on his own account as a tanner. Things went well with him in his business. He married in 1812, and soon became a father. Up to 1820 he was known chiefly as a keen but honourable man of business: his affections were apparently concentrated exclusively on his wife and children; to the outer world he showed a critical spirit and a keen sense of the ludicrous, which manifested themselves in satirical speech and occasional droll parodies in verse. In October, 1820, at the age of thirty-five, he went over to New Lanark, had some conversation with Owen, and saw the result of his labours. He straightway became a complete convert to Owen's views, and thereafter the man's whole outlook on life seems to have changed.

His belief in the New System was so ardent that he made a bet with a friend that within five years the Royal

Circus in Edinburgh would be pulled down, and buildings for a Community on Owen's principles erected in its stead. His enthusiasm ultimately, indeed, took a religious form. The periodical in which he has recorded the progress of his greatest experiment is headed "*Register of the First Society of Adherents to Divine Revelation at Orbiston.*" The term "divine revelation," he contends, "can rightly be applied only to the facts and the truths which the Great Governing Power of the Universe reveals to the senses and the understanding,"¹ and those "who have the will to look are able to see in the facts which are revealed to their senses a light from Heaven."²

With this fervour of conviction upon him, Combe devoted the remainder of his life to preaching and practising the truths revealed to him in the New System. He ceased to write epigrams and satires. His attitude towards his relations and towards all who sought his aid became as friendly and affectionate as it had hitherto been repellent. In the autumn of 1821, as we have already seen, he founded in Edinburgh the *Practical Society*, to carry out Owen's principles as far as circumstances would admit. The members of the Practical Society, which included at one time some five hundred or six hundred families, opened a co-operative store, met regularly in the evenings for mutual instruction, dancing, and social intercourse generally, and instituted a school for their children on the New Lanark model. The children numbered about one hundred and thirty, and the schooling under the conduct of Captain Macdonald appears to have exercised a wonderful influence over them.

¹ *Register of Orbiston*, p. 1.

² *Ibid.* p. 11.

From being utterly riotous and unruly they became in a few weeks orderly, affectionate to their teachers and each other, and filled with zeal for learning. The adult members bound themselves to abstain from strong drink, tobacco and swearing. Combe himself went further and became a vegetarian. Whilst the enthusiasm of the members was still fresh, the Practical Society prospered; but it appears to have lasted less than a year, being ultimately broken up by the constant loss of members, who, belonging mostly to the working classes, were forced to leave Edinburgh in search of employment.¹

Combe next tried to found a Community on a small scale amongst the workmen in his tanyard. He built dormitories and a kitchen for them, and promised a share of the profits of the tannery for all who would join the Community. But this scheme also fell through very quickly. Combe between 1820 and 1825 published several books and pamphlets explanatory of his views. In his latest work, *The Sphere of Joint Stock Companies*, he propounded a scheme for the establishment of a Community on Owen's principles. The project of a Community at Motherwell had about this time fallen through for want of the necessary financial support, and Owen was about to transfer his interest to the enterprise of New Harmony. Hamilton of Dalzell, Jones, and other wealthy persons who had

¹ Only two reports were published, dated respectively February and April, 1822. Some account of its foundation will be found in the *Economist* (1821), Vol. II., pp. 336, 345. See also Captain Macdonald's letter, *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 174. The President, William Wilson, wrote to Owen on November 15, 1822, to say that there were about thirty members, chiefly mechanics, who would like to join a Community at once. He asks whether Owen can hold out any hopes of the speedy founding of a Community.

promised subscriptions to the Motherwell scheme, now associated themselves with Combe and purchased the estate of Orbiston, containing two hundred and ninety-one acres, on the banks of the Calder, about nine miles east of Glasgow. A huge building, intended to accommodate about one thousand persons, was begun on March 1, 1825. The capital required was fixed at £80,000, divided into two hundred shares at £400 each, and one hundred and twenty-five shares were actually taken up by the following October, the number of church-members at that date being sixteen. A substantial stone building was planned, four storeys high, to consist of a centre and two large wings. In the event only the left wing was completed, at a cost of £10,000; but that, as we learn later, afforded lodging, in 1827, for more than three hundred persons.

The accommodation was planned on a generous scale. Each adult man or woman was to have a private apartment, sixteen and a half feet by twelve, fitted up as bedroom and sitting room combined. There were to be common kitchens and dining rooms, and large public rooms for conversation and amusement, libraries, &c. All the cooking and eating arrangements were to be as far as possible in common; and the children were to be lodged in common dormitories, and brought up and educated in common nurseries and schools. Combe's original idea was that the care and education of the children should be a charge on the whole Community, but as it was found that some of the monastic members objected to this arrangement, it was agreed that each child should be debited with the entire cost of his maintenance and education, the necessary funds being advanced by the

parents, by Combe himself, or by other friends, in the confident expectation that the children when they reached maturer years would gladly consent that the repayment of their nurture should be a first charge upon the profits of their labour.

The enterprise did not open under the happiest auspices. Combe's unorthodox opinions were notorious;¹ moreover one of his English guests was overheard whistling on the Sabbath day, and the affair caused much scandal in the neighbourhood. Long before the Community was actually started the strangest stories circulated about the morals and behaviour of the prospective communists.² Combe for his part was sincerely shocked at the drunkenness and thriftlessness of his Scotch neighbours. Nevertheless, so absolute was his faith in the New System, that he accepted without any attempt at discrimination all who applied for admission to the Community. In justifying his conduct later he explained, "We set out to overcome Ignorance, Poverty and Vice; it would be a poor excuse for failure to urge that the subjects of our experiment were ignorant, poor and vicious."³

By the end of March, 1826, the left wing—a building 330 feet long, 40 feet broad and four storeys high—was roofed in, and more or less ready to receive its inmates. On Saturday, April 8, the masons and labourers who had been employed by the contractor marched off in procession, and on the following Monday the new era commenced with the cooking of the meals for the

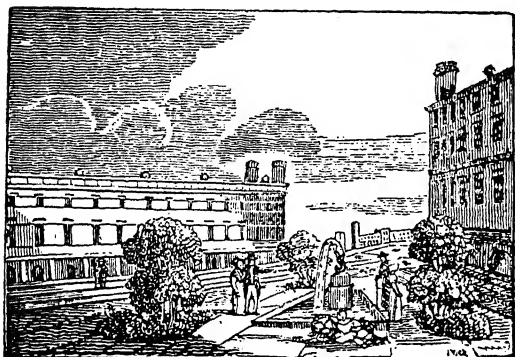
¹ The Superintendent of the New Lanark Stores actually refused, on the ground of Combe's unorthodoxy, to allow the *Orbiston Register* to be sold at the Stores (*Register*, Vol. I., p. 38).

² See *Register*, pp. 14, 15, etc.

³ *Register*, p. 125.



THE CRISIS



Two woodcuts printed on the title-page of *The Crisis*. The upper picture represents the old immoral world with the dilapidated houses, the beggars, the inn, gallows, lunatic asylum, dog- and cock-fights. The lower picture represents the order and harmony of the New Moral World.

members and their children in the communal kitchen. The experiment was begun under the most unfavourable circumstances. The building was by no means completed inside, the members, in their ardour to enter on the new life, having undertaken to get rid of the contractor's workmen and to finish the plastering, joinery and other necessary work themselves. The weather was extremely bad, the half-made roads were turned into quagmires; the women were discontented; a noisy cur banished sleep at night. Worse than all this, the members began to doubt the New System itself. Little forethought seems to have been given to the cooking and domestic arrangements. Those who did the work knew not where to look for payment; and many housewives expressed the opinion that individualist cooking was better and cheaper. So that the public room for a time was almost deserted. Out of doors things were no better. There was ground to be got ready for potato-planting. Twenty or thirty people dug energetically for an hour, then—since there was no man to direct them—they left off, and dug no more. The land lay idle for a week or two and then was parcelled up into individualist plots.

The first members of the Community are described in severe terms by one of their number: "A worse selection of individuals, men, women and children, could scarcely have been made—a population made up for the most part of the worst part of Society."¹ The adults were steeped in poverty; lazy, dirty and thriftless: "the smell of tobacco in almost every house, and a dunghill beginning to rise under almost every window." The children and youths were no better; they were quarrelsome, unmannerly

¹ *Orbiston Register*, Vol. I., p. 125.

and boisterous. An orchard was robbed in the neighbourhood, and suspicion fell upon the youth of Orbiston; nay, the communal fruit was by clandestine hands plucked untimely from the boughs of the communal trees.

Combe's interpretation of divine revelation would not permit him to exercise compulsion of any kind, nor even, it would appear, to direct the affairs of the Community from outside. The members of the Community, he states in reply to a critic, will be self-governed; and each man must act on his own account, and find out for himself what he can best do. So will he preserve his liberty and learn to realise the full value of his labour.¹

By August, however, the need for more definite organisation had become apparent. Many of the members needed something to replace the hunger-stimulus. They would work by fits and starts, and in the intervals give themselves up to "a languor and listlessness which no words could overcome."² In other words, they could not understand working for the general welfare; they wanted to take as much and give in return as little as possible. Combe was forced to give up his policy of non-interference, and under his guidance the infant Community was organised into squads or companies. The first of these companies, indeed, the Iron Foundry, started on its own initiative, and throughout the whole period of the Community's existence its members appear to have been the most energetic and the most successful. In the spring of 1827 we learn that they were making for sale in the outside markets

¹ *Orbiston Register*, Vol. I, p. 55 *seqq.*

² *Ibid.*, August, 1826, p. 123.

grates, fenders, kettles, goblets and many other articles ; and that they were fitting up a blast furnace, and had ordered a steam crane.¹

The Garden Squad, or Horticultural Company, started under less propitious auspices. A skilled gardener was engaged—a man of unfavourable appearance, but good phrenological development—who disappeared suddenly, after ten days, and the squad were left without any one to direct their energies. However, a year later we find that they had laboured to some purpose ; for nearly a thousand apple and pear trees had been planted by the spring of 1827, the produce of which, it was calculated, would in a few years suffice to pay the entire rent.²

There were also a Dairy Company, which started with the charge of ten cows, and hoped ultimately to have forty ; and a Building Company, which found work ready to their hands in completing the half-finished premises. Nine months later, according to the account already referred to in the *Nottingham Mercury*, the whole length of the upper storey was given up to weaving twine, which was afterwards made up into nets by the children, some of these nets being destined for use by the communal fishing boat, which was to supply the communists with fish of their own catching. There were at the same date three cotton and two silk weavers ; and improved machinery for silk-winding was being fitted up. Yarn was woven into cloth on the premises, and made up by the communal tailors into suits—a warm

¹ Account in *Nottingham Mercury* quoted in the *Co-operative Magazine* for April, 1827.

² *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., pp. 246, 250.

suit costing 20s. for an adult and 14s. for a boy. Cotton shirting, also woven on the premises, cost 10d. a yard, and a whole shirt 3s. 6d. There were two looms at work weaving silk shag into hats, to be worn no doubt by competitive stockbrokers in Glasgow. There were seven shoemakers, who supplied the wants of the Community and did outside work as well. There were cartwrights who made carriages and carts. Lastly, the elder lads worked in the fields or were learning skilled trades. At harvest time, and generally when occasion required, all the members of the Community left their ordinary occupations to take their share of the farm labour. By degrees, too, the domestic department was organised. From the first some women had been appointed to work in the kitchens; others were told off to sweep the stairs; to light and trim the lamps; others to wash the children's clothes, to look after the dormitories and to give instruction in the schoolroom.

The proprietors not only paid the whole cost of construction but advanced most of the capital required for starting the various industries; it being understood that the tenants were ultimately to repay the expenditure, out of the surplus produce of their labour. But the financial arrangements were of the loosest kind. At the outset, as said, all was confusion: there was no one to direct the workers, and some appear to have worked in outside employment, receiving ordinary wages for their labour; but, gradually, as the communal industries were organised, an increasing number gave their whole work to the Community, receiving payment by book credit at the communal store. The ordinary market rate of

wages was paid, in the first instance at any rate. Combe himself was in favour of pure communism ; but he held that in this as in other matters it was useless to attempt to impose a rule until the colonists were willing to accept it—an opinion for which he was sharply criticised in the pages of the *Co-operative Magazine*. In September, 1826, however, a general meeting of the tenants was held, at which, after some hours' debate, a resolution was passed—"That all the members of the Society unite together to produce a common stock, out of which all our common expenditure, hereafter to be agreed upon, will be paid; and that an equal share of the surplus of our labour be placed to the account of each member of the Community *according to the time occupied by each*." This resolution, it will be seen, though it falls short of pure communism, affirms the important principle of equal remuneration for all kinds of labour. The resolution was not passed unanimously; the representative of the Iron Foundry dissented, preferring the individualist system of unequal remuneration. And it is not clear, from later accounts of the industries within the Society, that the resolution was, in fact, ever carried out in its entirety. But the affirmation of the principle marks an important stage in the progress of Socialism.¹

At the same meeting the tenants offered to take over the whole premises and land from the proprietors, undertaking to pay them 5 per cent. interest on their outlay, and ultimately to repay the whole of the capital advanced; the representative of the proprietors, Abram

¹ The debate on the question, which is of considerable interest, will be found in the *Orbiston Register* for October, 1826. It is quoted at full length in the *Co-operative Magazine* for November of the same year.

Combe, being made meanwhile Treasurer of the Colony, so as to have the opportunity of safeguarding his own interests and those of his fellow-proprietors. Combe's illness and premature death intervened, and this arrangement also never came to an issue. But it is scarcely doubtful whether, if Combe had lived, the colony could have paid its way without a radical change in its constitution, if not also in its constituents. The latter, as already said, had been admitted as they applied, without any kind of selection; and it was, as one of them said, a promiscuous multitude who fled to Orbiston as to a city of refuge.¹

Some of the most unsatisfactory members had gradually been eliminated, but enough still remained to endanger the working of the enterprise. In the *Orbiston Register* of May 9, 1827, the editorial states that some of the members had given in to the timekeeper a greater number of hours than they had actually worked, and had thus inflated their credit at the Stores. But worse revelations were to follow. It was clearly the bounden duty of the members, whilst the future of the enterprise was still uncertain, to restrict their consumption within the narrowest limits, so as to leave a margin to pay rent, interest, and other public burdens. It appeared, however, that a considerable section of the communists were in the habit of working only just enough to cover their credit at the Stores for food and clothing, withdrawing the whole of their earnings and leaving others to bear the public burdens. The proof of this charge throws some light on the inner workings of the Society. The colony at this time (June, 1827) numbered, exclusive

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 248.

of children in arms, 298 persons. Of these 221 (104 adults, 44 working boys, 73 children) fed at the public mess.¹ But the remainder (64 adults and 13 children) chose to cater for themselves and to withdraw what they required from the Stores, up to the limits of their credit. A comparative table of the consumption reveals a curious disproportion. In the course of one week the 221 persons consumed, at the public mess, 97 pecks of oatmeal—the 77 purchased 103 pecks; the bread consumed at mess cost £6 3s. 4d.—the bread sold (almost exclusively to the 77) cost £13 16s. 8d.; the sugar consumed by the 221 in mess amounted to 60½ lb.—the 77 made away with 91½ lb.; the minority took nearly three times as much salt and more than four times as much butter as the majority. It was impossible that these 77 persons should really have consumed this enormous amount of food; and the writer of the editorial draws the inference that the surplus was either given away to feed outsiders, or even deliberately exchanged outside for commodities which the purchasers would better have been lacking. Members, he writes, ought to work as hard and live as plainly and simply as they can until success is assured, and our debt paid off: “but many rise no earlier than they can help, and leave their employment as soon as they can; or, if their *time* is occupied, drag through the day as easily and comfortably as possible, and in return for their services grasp all they can get.”²

However, notwithstanding these black sheep, the

¹ The charge for feeding at the public mess was 4s. or 4s. 6d. a week—a sum just sufficient to pay the cost of food and cooking. Probably the sum quoted was the charge for adults. (*Register*, Vol. II., pp. 54, 55.)

² *Orbiston Register*, Vol. II., p. 57.

Community seems to have made steady progress. The external aspect of the settlement improved rapidly as the months went by. Roads and garden walks were finished, shrubs and fruit-trees were planted. The squalor and filth amid which the first settlers—peasants and weavers from the neighbourhood for the most part—were content to live had shocked early visitors to the colony. But in the course of eighteen months there was much change for the better. The kitchen middens which originally stood on each side of the doorways made themselves less obtrusive; the habit of throwing water out of window, if it did not entirely cease, became unfashionable; and the private apartments seem to have been kept decently clean. The kitchen arrangements were improved, and the domestic department generally was more thoroughly organised. Much no doubt still remained to be done: the stairs were occasionally swept, but not apparently washed, nor were the windows cleaned.

The children to the last remained noisy and boisterous. A large playroom was provided for them, but they preferred, after their kind, to play leap-frog on the stairways and passages, to the great annoyance of the more peaceful inmates; they presented a wild scene of misrule and disorder to the astonished eyes and ears of a visitor from Glasgow, who came one Sunday evening in December, 1826, to hear Miss Whitwell lecture.¹ But the improvement in the conduct of the elder lads is perhaps the most encouraging episode recorded in the brief history of Orbiston. At the outset these lads, with nothing to do and no one to direct their energies, had

¹ Report in *Glasgow Free Press*, quoted in *Orbiston Register*, Vol. I., p. 182.

been the terror of their fellow-colonists and a scandal to the neighbourhood. Some of Combe's severest homilies in the early numbers of the *Register* are addressed to these youthful sinners. But one fortunate Sunday in December, 1826, when the patience of their elders was nearly exhausted, A. Campbell took them in hand. He assembled them to the number of about twenty in a large room, where he proposed to occupy their minds with a lecture on elementary physics. For the purpose of some simple experiments he had provided himself with a basin of water, and the happy thought came to him to make this water the text of a sermon on cleanliness. His exhortation had immediate effect ; his hearers carried off the basin, washed their hands and faces in the water, cleaned their shoes with shavings which had been gathered for fire-kindling, and came back in a state of Sabbatic cleanliness to listen to the lecture. This occupied them until dinner ; and when the meal was over they re-assembled, impannelled a jury from their number, and held a formal trial of John Paine for beating and calling names to John Gordon. The charge was proved, and the panel was severely reprimanded. Then followed a homily from Mr. Campbell against tobacco ; and the boys straightway produced their stores of the scandalous vegetable and cheerfully gave them to the flames.¹

Thereafter there was no more trouble with the boys ; all were eager to work ; some in the fields, some at various trades ; many elected to learn joinery, and, with the aid of their instructor, set to work to roof in a large shed.² The latest news we have of the boys

¹ *Orbiston Register*, December 13, 1826, p. 183.

² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

is that some are learning the violin, others the flute, clarionet, French horn, oboe, bugle, trumpet, and all manner of instruments of music, in order to act as an orchestra for the new theatre.

This theatre was the crowning achievement of the colonists. It was constructed on one of the upper floors, and could seat about three hundred people. It was opened in March, 1827, with a performance of Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, presented by members of the Community. The scenery was painted by Miss Whitwell, the lady who had produced the historical charts representing the Stream of Time for the walls of the New Lanark schools.

At this time—the spring and summer of 1827—all seemed to be going well with the colony. Owen himself paid a visit to the Community in the summer, and found everything in a most flourishing condition.¹ The prospects of the harvest were good; a large piggery had just been started; an inn had been opened for the reception of visitors; new sewage works were in progress; the foundry and the other trades were doing good business, and the colonists were enjoying life. Private letters are enthusiastic about the happiness in the present, and the glorious hopes for the future. One lady writes that she had never been so comfortable and happy. “It is like another world . . . I have been at a meeting last night, and such mirth I never knew. There is dancing three times a week. Indeed there is nothing but pleasure, with the best of eating and drinking.”²

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. III., p. 13.

² *Co-operative Magazine*, December, 1826.

But the catastrophe was already near, though Abram Combe, *felix opportunitate mortis*, did not live to see the end of his great experiment. A neglected chill, aggravated by over-exertion in digging the common soil at Orbiston, brought on a fatal illness; and he died on August 11, 1827, happy in the belief that the enterprise to which he had given his fortune and his life itself was "established beyond the probability of failure."¹ From his deathbed he looked back upon his life and the work of his hands and found them good. In his last hours he dictated his epitaph: "That his conduct in life met the approbation of his own mind at the hour of death."²

The latest news from Orbiston, a few weeks after Combe's death, continues the flattering tale. All is going well; the harvest is excellent; there are thirty or forty pigs in the sty; and thirteen milch cows. A dam is being constructed and a waterwheel about to be set up, and a brewery and a tan-yard are in contemplation. A librarian and library committee have been elected, and two rooms appropriated for the books. During the coming winter the boys are to be clothed in tartan, and the girls in purple bombazet.

And on the prospect of these sartorial glories the curtain falls. The immediate cause of the catastrophe is not very clear. After Abram Combe's death—as indeed for some months previously the management of the Society devolved upon his brother William, who

¹ The phrase is taken from a letter written from Orbiston shortly after Combe's death, published in the *Co-operative Magazine* for November, 1827.

² See the memoir of Combe in the *Orbiston Register*, September 19, 1827.

continued to carry things on as before for a few weeks. But in the late autumn of 1827 he gave the members notice to quit the premises, and the whole concern—land, buildings and standing crops—was shortly afterwards sold by public auction. William Combe's action is said to have been determined by pressure from the mortgagees, who had advanced £16,000 on the security of the land and buildings. But it would appear also that notwithstanding the brave outward seeming the affairs of the Society had not been going well even before Abram Combe's death. At the very time when the theatre was being constructed, and the boys were being taught, at some expense, to play the violin, the communal Stores, we are told, had run out of tea and sugar, and had no money to buy more.¹ It is certain that at the anniversary gathering in April, 1827, the members feasted on ham washed down with tea, because they had no money to buy anything stronger; and the Foundry Company's stock at the same date was rumoured to be below par, and their goods on sale at much less than their real value.²

In the event the buildings were razed to the ground, and now not one stone remains on another to mark the site of Orbiston.

All Combe's property was lost in the catastrophe, and his family were left destitute.³ Hamilton also lost all his money, and went abroad.⁴ A worse fate befell some of those connected with the enterprise. Alex Campbell, the schoolmaster of the boys, and William

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. III., p. 218.

² *Orbiston Register*, April, 1827.

³ Letter to Owen from Mrs. Combe, May 13, 1838.

⁴ Letter to Owen of January 17, 1830.

Shedden, both members of the Foundry Company, were locked up in Hamilton Jail at the instance of some of the creditors, being apparently personally liable for the capital lent for the erection of the foundry. Campbell was, however, by no means discouraged by the events of the three preceding years. He writes to Owen, dating from the jail, on October 3, 1828, that he is more than ever convinced of the truth of Owen's teachings, and that "in the event of liberation" he intends to engage in other plans "for the furtherance of a system which under all circumstances, I am fully persuaded, is as far superior to the present system of Society as knowledge is superior to ignorance." Later Campbell became one of the Social Missionaries, and throughout his life remained an attached and enthusiastic disciple.

CHAPTER XVI

EARLY CO-OPERATORS

ORBISTON was the only Community on a large scale actually founded in this country on Owen's principles prior to 1840. But there were many plans for establishing similar Communities at this time, and two or three other experiments were made, but on a much smaller scale. Towards the end of 1824 the popular movement, which had been inarticulate since catastrophe overtook the London Co-operative and Economical Society, began to revive. In the winter of 1824 was founded the London Co-operative Society, which aimed at removing the difficulties standing in the way of a general acceptance of Owen's views, by means of lectures, discussions, publications of various kinds, "and by every means that could be adopted to place the subject in a clear point of view."¹

The Society began by hiring rooms in Burton Street, Burton Crescent, London, W.C., and held periodical debates on the relative merits of the two systems—Individual Competition and Mutual Co-operation. These debates, which were continued in the later headquarters at Red Lion Square, formed a prominent feature in the Society's propaganda for some years to come. Here are

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I. (1826), p. 55.

some of the subjects advertised for public discussion on these occasions.

Is the position of Mr. Owen correct, that man is not properly the subject of praise or blame, reward or punishment?

Is there any principle in human nature which presents an insurmountable barrier to the co-operative system?

What is the best mode of educating and training children?

Is the labourer entitled to the whole produce of his labour? and why, in the present state of Society, is the lot of the producing classes poverty and wretchedness?

Is not that system of society the best in which equality of wealth, general diffusion of knowledge and perfect liberty co-exist?

Are continuous or detached buildings the best adapted for co-operative associations?

Is the statement of Mr. Malthus, that population has a tendency to increase faster than the means of subsistence, if correct, an insuperable barrier to the co-operative system?

The rooms in Burton Street were not found sufficiently central, and the "Crown and Rolls" rooms in Chancery Lane were chosen as the theatre of the discussions in 1825. The "Crown and Rolls" witnessed a famous debate, which was prolonged from week to week for several months, between the Owenites and the orthodox economists. The discussion arose out of a lecture given on "the System," but the chief battleground was on the

population question. Charles Austin, John Stuart Mill, Roebuck and other members of the Young Liberal party came down night after night to uphold the claims of Malthus and common sense. The leading champion on the Owenite side was William Thompson, supported by Gale Jones and by Thirlwall, the historian, afterwards Bishop of St. David's.¹ In the course of the same year the Co-operative Society started a novel form of propaganda by means of social breakfasts, held monthly on Sundays, at which about fifty people would attend and discuss the advantages of the New System.

In September, 1825, Owen addressed a well-attended and enthusiastic public meeting at the London Mechanics' Institution; and two years later, on his return from one of his visits to America, he gave a series of Sunday morning addresses at breakfasts held at the Co-operative Society's rooms.

In November, 1825, the Society moved its rooms to 36, Red Lion Square, where it remained for some years; and in January of the following year was commenced the publication of the *Co-operative Magazine and Monthly Herald*, a periodical which continued with varying fortunes, and under various names, until the end of 1830.

From the early numbers of the *Co-operative Magazine* we learn much about New Harmony, and about the experiment at Orbiston, then just started on its brief career. But the London co-operators were not content to be merely passive spectators of the trials and triumphs of others. They had formed a plan for establishing

¹ See *Mill's Autobiography*, pp. 123-5, and *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 56.



FREDERICK OWEN.

Engraving of portrait published in the first volume of *The Crisis*.

a Community within fifty miles of London, and even went so far in April, 1826, as to advertise for suitable farms, containing from five hundred to two thousand acres of land, to be purchased or let on long lease.¹ Already in February, 1826, shares to the amount of £4,000 had been taken up; and Owen's return to England in the autumn of that year was expected to bring the project to a speedy issue.²

Similar projects were on foot in other parts of the country. In February of this year, 1826, a meeting was held at the "Freemason's Tavern," Dublin, Captain R. O'Brien in the chair, at which a Dublin Co-operative Society was formed, Lord Cloncurry expressing his approval and sympathy.³ At a later date we learn that the Society was in a flourishing condition, that some thousands of pounds had been subscribed, and that the members were in treaty for a nobleman's seat.⁴

Like most of the schemes for co-operative colonies, however, the Dublin Society's efforts appear to have been without result; at any rate, we hear no more of the project. One millennial vision of this period was, however, actually translated into fact, and enjoyed a brief existence on what Owen, in his later years, would have called the material plane.

In the spring of 1826 was formed the Devon and Exeter Co-operative Society; and in the course of the summer one of the members, Mr. Vesey, a gentleman of some property, joined with a few others in purchasing a small estate of thirty-seven acres near Exeter. Thirteen

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 106.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 250.

co-operators, including a gardener, carpenter, quarrier, well-sinker, etc., started to work at once, to prepare buildings for the communists.¹ A month later we read that twelve cottages were already finished ; and that Mr. Vesey hoped, by a new method, to house four hundred families for a total outlay of one thousand pounds. The situation of the new colony is described as delightful, and the colonists themselves as eager and hopeful for the future. But later in the year the fair prospect clouded. Mr. Vesey, the chief financial supporter of the scheme, withdrew at once his personal co-operation and his capital, and the experiment had to be abandoned. The cause of this betrayal is not precisely stated, but the editor hints at domestic reasons which were possibly uncontrollable.² However, the colonists, in no way discouraged, took another farm in the neighbourhood, and began to build their Community again.

In August of the following year (1827) a general meeting of the new Society—the Dowlands Devon Community—was held, and we learn that the crops are remarkably fine, that the trades in operation are more than paying their expenses—and that though the funds are low, the assets exceed the liabilities. But no new recruits had joined ; and more capital was needed. Still, considering all things, the chronicler finds the prospect not discouraging. Mrs. D. is reported to be alone discontented, apparently because she cannot get enough women to work with her. And thereafter we hear no more of the Devon Community. The editorial retrospect of the progress in 1827 does not mention it by

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, July, 1826, p. 226.

² *Ibid.*, January, 1827, p. 23.

name, and we may infer therefore that by the end of the year it had ceased to exist. But in place of any formal obituary, we find a passing reference to certain Communities whose members have in the past year been forced by adverse circumstances to dissolve, but have not been disheartened by their temporary failure.¹

But even whilst the experiments at New Harmony and Orbiston and the small colony in Devonshire just described were to the eyes of the hopeful onlooker still far from the final catastrophe, and whilst the London Co-operative Society was still endeavouring to collect the £50,000 required for starting a similar Community on an adequate scale near London, the conviction seems to have been steadily growing amongst the working classes that any attempts to better their condition must, to ensure success, originate with themselves. Owen, the apostle of the movement, after several years' propaganda, had failed to raise in this country the money which he judged to be necessary for providing even one small instalment of the millennium, and was now giving his money and his services in the New World. Combe and Hamilton with their colleagues were fully occupied in Scotland. The fund raised by the London Co-operative Society had amassed £4,000 only towards the necessary £50,000. Even if there were a sufficient number of wealthy men, ready, like Owen and Combe, to come forward and risk their capital in undertakings of this kind, even then the rich philanthropists would naturally want to do the thing in their own way : "and since their way is not our way, there could hardly be that unanimity and boundless confidence in a community established by them, that

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, January, 1828.

there would be in one founded upon a system of perfect equality, every member of which may say, 'this is ours, and for us.'"¹

Possessed with these ideas, and realising that the scheme of the London Society was on too large a scale, some of the London co-operators began to consider amongst themselves whether a Community deriving its capital wholly from the contributions of the members could not be established on a more economical basis. With this view there was founded in June, 1826, the Co-operative Community Fund Association, whose ultimate objects were identical with those proposed by the larger scheme. But the new Society proposed to raise a fund of £1,250 only, in fifty shares of £25 each. The shares were to be paid for by a minimum weekly contribution of 4s. from each member; it was further provided that though a member was at liberty to subscribe more than 4s. a week, he was not to look for any advantage as a consequence of such extra contribution. When £500 had been accumulated—*i.e.* at the end of twelve months, if all the shares were taken up at once—it was proposed to take on lease the necessary land, and begin the erection of suitable buildings. It was anticipated that by the time the whole capital had been subscribed the buildings would be ready for occupation, and the colonists thereafter in a position to maintain themselves by a suitable combination of manufactures and agriculture.²

At about the same time another Co-operative Community was planned on a like economical basis. The scene of this second experiment was to be in Ireland,

¹ Letter signed J. L. in *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 372.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 308, etc.

within fifteen miles of Cork, and an admirable constitution and code of laws for the proposed colony were drawn up by William Thompson, author of the *Distribution of Wealth*, one of the ablest exponents of the new school of Socialists who derived their moral inspiration from Owen. The document is interesting as containing an authoritative exposition of the economic creed of the Socialists of the period, the fundamental tenet being the assumption, which we have already met with in Owen's *Report to the County of Lanark*, that all wealth is created by manual labour alone, and can be valued only in terms of labour, with the inevitable corollary that the labourer has an indefeasible right to the whole of what he produces. The document begins by setting forth that "more than nine-tenths of the products of the skilled labour of the industrious classes are now consumed by those who themselves produce nothing." It then goes on to define the primary object of a Co-operative Community as being to secure for its members, who, being drawn from the industrious classes, are "the only real producers," "the whole or by far the greater part of the future products of their labour"; by means of "*mutual co-operation* for the supply of each others' wants, and *equal distribution* amongst all of the products of their united industry."¹

The Cork Community when complete was to consist of about 2,000 persons; the adults subscribing £5 each, the children under twelve £2 10s. Land was to be taken at the rate of one acre for each individual, and the experiment was to begin as soon as 200 members had joined. The capital was to be used in

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 314 *seqq.*

the first instance in purchasing the necessary stock, etc., and in procuring food for the members for the first year. In subsequent years it was calculated that the Community would consume only three-fourths of the annual produce, the remainder being applied to the purchase of machinery and stock, the payment of rent and the purchase of the land. Children were to be supported and educated at the common charges, but from the age of five onwards they were expected to support themselves and defray all the expenses of their education by their own industry. The constitution was to be purely democratic; the direction and organisation of the industry being vested in committees elected by the members and serving only for short terms.

On the assumption that the Community would start with 200 adult members, the following distribution of employments is recommended:—52 for gardening and agriculture; 66 for building and furnishing; 59 for linen, cotton and woollen manufactures; and 23 for miscellaneous employments, such as baker, shoemaker, miller, storekeepers, teachers, etc.

The Cork experiment seems never to have advanced beyond the stage of resolutions and paper constitutions. But the London Co-operative Community Fund Association took an important step forward. In April of the following year, 1827, they announce the formation of an Auxiliary Fund, to be composed of the profits of a trading enterprise carried on by members of the Association. Their idea was in fact to found a General Store or shop, where goods should be retailed to members, the profits going to the common fund. In the first instance apparently the idea was to keep in

the Store mainly articles manufactured by or dealt in by the members. But the advantages of procuring at wholesale price provisions and other goods of common consumption, and of thus intercepting the middleman's profits, soon became apparent. C. F. C., the writer of the letter announcing the formation of the Auxiliary Fund, ventures on a prophecy which co-operators of the present day may read with interest. "I hope one day to see the Association in possession of at least one repository in each of the leading thoroughfares in London. I anticipate the time when that body will arrest the tide of riches in its progress and divert it into a new and publicly beneficial channel, instead of suffering all the gains of commerce to flow into the pockets of particular individuals . . . when it will take up a few of those gains in their progress, from time to time, and by this means emancipate the millions from the control of the units . . . Posterity will then remember it as the Social Redemption Fund."¹

If we substitute "leading towns in the country" for "leading thoroughfares in London" the prophecy is not far wide of the mark at the present day.

In the same number of the *Co-operative Magazine* (May, 1827) there is an article headed "How to procure funds for a Co-operative Community," in which another writer outlines a similar plan. He suggests that the best method to make a beginning would be for the intending colonists to meet together periodically, and sell amongst themselves such articles as their present occupations enabled them to make or to procure economically, and to hand over a percentage of the profit

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 224.

on each transaction to a common fund. By this means, as the writer points out, a steadily growing capital would be accumulated with little risk; the future colonists would practise themselves in working for a common end, and would get to know their own and each others' qualifications for the more complete co-operation demanded in a Community. The suggestion was quickly adopted, and a few weeks later there was formed the Union Exchange Society. The members agreed to meet together once a month at 36, Red Lion Square, the headquarters of the London Co-operative Society, and to sell to each other such goods as they could command. Ten per cent. was to be levied on the gross sales and handed over to a common fund which, after the expenses of the meeting (1s. 3d. a night) had been paid, was to be divided equally amongst all the members present. The profits, it is explained, were to be divided amongst the members in the first instance, instead of being retained in a common fund, lest discord should arise by the introduction of new members, before the plans for the disposal of the common fund were finally settled. But the chronicler proceeds, "we shall in all probability, at I hope no distant day, determine to have a community."¹

They began by selling tea, bread, flour, boots, shoes, clothes, umbrellas, carved and gilt articles, brass and tin ware. The gross sales for July, 1827, were £4 12s. 6d.; for August £4 17s. 6d. In September, however, the sales amounted to nearly £7, and there was a marked increase not only in the members, but in the number of articles on sale. Butter, cheese, bacon and potatoes

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 549.

could now be procured in addition to the articles already enumerated.

Of the Union Exchange Society we hear no more after December, 1827. But a more long-lived Society was the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association, which was founded on much the same lines and at about the same time. In announcing its formation the Society defines its objects as follows: (1) "To raise by a small weekly contribution a fund for the purpose of enabling proper persons to join Co-operative Communities, by giving the whole or part of the capital, as the circumstances of the individual may require; (2) to spread a knowledge of the Co-operative system."¹

A few weeks later we learn that the members now numbered 150 and that their contributions to the fund, at 1*d.* a week each, amounted therefore to 12*s.* 6*d.* a week. The members were all of the productive classes, and included agricultural labourers, carpenters, bricklayers, printers, cabinet-makers, turners, painters, gardeners, dressmakers, bakers, tailors, tinmen, copper-smiths, shoemakers, bookbinders, grocers, domestic servants, etc. By July they had hit upon a more rapid method of accumulating the funds required, and had started a Trading Association with capital in £5 shares, of which forty were taken up by the end of September.²

In a circular issued at this time their economic creed

¹ Letter dated April 12, 1827, published in the *Co-operative Magazine* for May, 1827, p. 225.

² The shares were not fully paid up at once. The arrangement was that 1*s.* a week should be paid by the shareholders on each share, and that all profits on the trading should accumulate until the £5 was fully paid up. (*Co-operative Magazine* for September, 1827, pp. 419, 420.)

and their aims were clearly defined. "They see that the real cost of all commodities is the amount of labour employed in preparing them for use"; and yet the rich, who take little or no share in the work, grow richer, and the workers find it each year more difficult to procure the bare necessities of life. With a view to secure to the working classes a larger share of the fruits of their own labour they announce that they have already started buying goods wholesale, and retailing them, on the ordinary stores principle; but they also contemplate "the interchange of the articles produced by their own labour at the real cost of production.

"This they expect to accomplish by having a Store, Repository or Exchange, in which a confidential agent will receive from members of the Association such articles as they produce, and, according to a scale authorised by a Committee or Council of work, give them an order for other commodities in Store to an equal value at prime cost, or a note for the value of so much labour as is brought in; which note may be cancelled when articles of that value are issued for it, so that the labour notes may always represent the quantity of goods in Store and work unrequired."¹

In January, 1828, we learn that the numbers have increased to two hundred; that the members are looking out for a schoolmaster, and hope to educate all their children together. It is intended, as soon as the children are old enough, that they should be taught various branches of industry, for the benefit of themselves and the Community. Finally it is announced that "when they are able to afford it, which they expect to be in about

¹ *Co-operative Magazine* for November, 1827.

a year, they will hire a farm with a purchasing clause, locate themselves, and live in a Community.”¹

From a sympathetic article published in the *Quarterly Review* for November, 1829, we gather some further particulars of this Society. Apparently the early members included, besides the artisans and working men referred to, a few small capitalists who took up several of the shares in the Trading Association. Differences of opinion soon developed; the working men were unanimous in their desire to carry out the original intention, and endeavour to found a Community; the capitalists wished the concern to remain as a joint-stock trading association that they might continue to receive their profits. Eventually these latter seceded from the association, receiving back the amount of their original capital, but leaving the accumulated property to the would-be communists. The seceders built a fishing-boat with their capital, and were reported to be making a handsome profit out of it. The original Society, at the date of the *Quarterly* article, had, in addition to their shop, a garden of twenty eight acres, and were about to open another shop, to dispose of their garden produce. They were giving employment, as salesmen and gardeners, to seven of their own number. Ultimately they hoped to procure land and build on it a terrace of small houses, with a bazaar for their products in front. In the meantime, as they could not afford to risk their tiny capital, they had started a separate subscription fund for the benefit of the sick, and for the families of those who should die. The reviewer attributes the success attained by the Society mainly to the great care shown by them in

¹ *Co-operative Magazine* for January, 1828.

admitting new members. The characters of all applicants for membership were closely scrutinised, and no drunkards or idle persons were admitted.¹

The Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association, or, as they seem to have been called later, the West Street Co-operative Society, never realised their ideal of a self-sufficing Community living on their own land. But it may fairly be claimed for them that much of the success of the Co-operative movement of 1820-30 was due to their example. The earliest provincial Co-operative periodical, the Brighton *Co-operator*, was started in connection with their enterprise. The *Co-operator*, which ran for about two years (May, 1828, to August, 1830), is not a formal chronicle of the movement so much as a series of homilies on the benefits of co-operation, as a means of escape for the working man from the misery and degradation entailed by the hopeless fight against capital aided by machinery. But we learn incidentally from its pages something of the rapid progress made.

In May, 1828, there are recorded only four Societies in the United Kingdom—the parent Association at 36, Red Lion Square, London, the West Street, Brighton, Society; another Society at 10, Queen's Place, Brighton, with the high-sounding title of "The Sussex General Co-operative Trading Association," and a Society at 20, Marine Place, Worthing. The Queen's Place Society was founded on the same general lines as its sister Association. It proposed to start by purchasing

¹ Some account of the Brighton Society is given in letters written to Owen by one of the members, P. O. Skene, in September and October, 1828. The lease of the garden ground had then just been completed.

provisions wholesale and retailing them at current prices, "leaving the profit to accumulate for the purpose of purchasing or leasing land for the formation of a Community on the principles of mutual co-operation and equal distribution of property as set forth by that worthy philanthropist, Robert Owen."¹

In its last number (August, 1830) the *Co-operator* was able to announce the existence of three hundred societies in all parts of the United Kingdom, and a Co-operative Bazaar at 19, Greville Street, Hatton Garden, London. That all these Societies had before them as their ultimate aim the formation of a Community is not clear. But we know that the West Street Society received applications from intending Associations in several parts of the country asking for instructions how to proceed.² And the editor³ of the Brighton *Co-operator* is quite clear as to the final cause of all Co-operative Trading Associations. In the first number he describes the four original Societies as founded "with the intention of ultimately purchasing land and living in Community."⁴ Later this sentence disappears, and the Societies are referred to simply as Co-operative Societies. But in the issue for October, 1828, he defines the objects of such Societies as threefold. First, to protect their members against poverty; secondly to secure comforts for them; and thirdly to achieve independence. And the means to these ends are, first a weekly subscription from the members to procure capital for trading with; then the manufacturing for themselves; "lastly, when the capital

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, March, 1828.

² *Ibid.*, October, 1828.

³ His name was King. See later, Chapter XVII.

⁴ *Co-operator*, May, 1828.

has still further accumulated, the purchase of land and living upon it in Community.”¹ And from an article in the following number it is evident that the Community which he contemplates, and which he holds up for an example to his fellow co-operators, is one in which all are to have an equal share in the good things ; and in which none shall have cause to envy another for his superior strength or skill, since he and all his fellows will share in the benefits of that superiority.

Again, in accordance with the principles of their founder, stress is laid by all co-operators upon the importance, in the new system, of education. The members of a Co-operative Society, we read, will meet together for mutual instruction and will pay special attention to the education of their children. They will send them to the best schools in the neighbourhood ; or, better still, when they can afford it, they will appoint a schoolmaster themselves.²

In addressing a nascent Co-operative Society at Leeds, we find the delegate from a Birmingham Society enumerating the education of the children as one of the prime objects of co-operators ;³ and part of the last number of the Brighton *Co-operator* is devoted to an account of Fellenberg’s experiments in educating the children of the poor and teaching them to earn their own subsistence.

¹ The Editor of the *Co-operative Magazine* expresses himself to the same effect. The object of a Trading Association or Co-operative Society, he says, is briefly to buy wholesale, sell retail to members, “and to accumulate a fund for the purpose of renting land for cultivation and the formation thereon of a Co-operative Community.” (*Co-operative Magazine*, January, 1830.)

² *Co-operator*, October, 1828.

³ *Ibid.*, November, 1829.

Such, then, were the ideals and aspirations of the first Co-operative Societies. They were small associations of artisans and others, met together in the common hope of ultimately founding a Community in which they could live together in fellowship, enjoying in common the whole fruits of their labour, islanded from the poverty and degradation around them, and leaving to their children an inheritance more precious even than this material wellbeing, in minds and characters moulded by a rational system of education to the full stature of a man. To these early co-operators the word co-operation was synonymous with brotherly love; the petty trading profits were an earnest of liberty for themselves and their children; and the grocery store appeared as an antechamber to the millennium.

CHAPTER XVII

LABOUR EXCHANGES

DURING the progress of most of the events described in the last two chapters Owen was engaged in conducting the great experiment at New Harmony and in lecturing in the chief towns of the United States, and had but little attention to spare for the doings of his followers in this country. But in the course of the year 1829, after the debate at Cincinnati with the Rev. Alexander Campbell, he returned to England, and did not revisit the United States until the summer of 1844. The interval of fifteen years was spent in active public work in this country, some account of which will be given in the chapters which follow. Nearly the whole of this period is covered by two newspapers edited by Owen, or directly under his control—the *Crisis*, which ran from 1832-34 and the *New Moral World*, which, starting on November 1 of the latter year, did not come to an end until the autumn of 1845. There are abundant records, therefore, of Owen's public activities. But before proceeding to consider this aspect of his career, it will be convenient to give a few particulars of his personal life and affairs during this period.

During his stay in England in the winter of 1828-29 Owen seems to have severed his connection with New Lanark. He himself resided for part of this visit at

Mr. Walker's house at 49, Bedford Square, London. His wife and three daughters—the sons had already settled in New Harmony—remained at Braxfield for some months, but, as we learn from a letter written by Jane Owen to her father in November, 1828, they were at this time looking out for a small house at Kirkcaldy or Hamilton. Ultimately they moved to Allan Bank, Hamilton; but this appears to have been only a temporary home, for Mrs. Owen writes to her husband from Allan Bank on September 23, 1830, that they cannot yet find a house to suit them. If she is to live within her income, she cannot afford a higher rent than £30 a year. She is dismissing two of the servants, a maid, and the man who works in the garden: she intends to keep only two maids in future. She goes on to speak of Anne's serious illness, and her own need of Owen's presence; "Oh my dear husband, how much I feel the want of you to advise with in a time of so much anxiety. . . . I hope you will remember next Thursday, the day when we became *one*—thirty-one years ago, and I think from what I feel myself that we love one another as sincerely and understand one another much better than we did thirty-one years ago. My sincere wish is that nothing may ever happen to diminish this affection."

In the following month Anne died. In the thirteenth of the *Lectures on an Entire New State of Society*,¹ probably published in this year, Owen gave to his London disciples a brief account of his eldest daughter's life and her conversion to his own views. She had devoted her time mainly to teaching in the New Lanark Schools,

¹ The book bears no date of issue.

and to study. The last book she had read, just before the commencement of her fatal illness, was Brown's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*. A few memoranda found amongst her papers are printed at the end of the lectures referred to.

In the following spring Mrs. Owen herself died ; and Mary, the youngest daughter, followed her mother and sister in the spring of 1832.¹ The surviving daughter, Jane, proceeded to New Harmony to join her brothers, and ultimately married Robert Fauntleroy and settled there.

Owen's only other near relation, according to her own account, was his sister, Mrs. Weaver, to whom he sent regular remittances. A nephew, Robert Owen Davies, who was in somewhat better circumstances, also figures in the Manchester Correspondence.

Of Owen's money affairs after the New Harmony experiment we have no exact account ; but it is clear that he was a comparatively poor man. He had a good deal of landed property at New Harmony, and in 1831 we find from letters written to him by his solicitor J. Wright, an old friend of the family, that he had £6,000 invested in the New Lanark Mills, and was receiving interest on this sum at the rate of 5 per cent.—£300 a year. Some considerable part of this balance of his fortune was, however, probably lost in the Labour Exchange experiments of 1832-3.²

Robert Dale Owen tells us that some years after the purchase of New Harmony, hearing that their father's

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 15.

² See R. Dale Owen, *Threading my Way*, p. 261, and *Life of Robert Owen*, Philadelphia (1866), p. 224. See also the latter part of this chapter.

funds were running low, he and his brother William transferred to Robert Owen their shares—£20,000 in all—in the New Lanark Mills. Owen certainly had money, though probably not very much, all through the period of the *New Moral World*. We find him, for instance, contributing over £700 to the Queenwood scheme. At a later date, apparently 1844,¹ he appears again to have exhausted his resources. Robert Dale Owen accordingly presents his father with an audaciously cooked account—not unworthy to be compared with the Queenwood balance-sheets—by which a balance of £640 standing to Robert Owen's credit in the account with his sons is so manipulated that it ultimately grows to the respectable figure of £6,000. On this sum Robert Owen's three surviving sons propose to pay their father for the remainder of his life interest at the rate of 6 per cent.—£360 a year. This arrangement appears to have been continued until his death.

Thus when Owen returned to this country at the end of 1829 he came as a comparatively poor man. His enthusiasm, however, was unabated. His experiences at New Harmony had by no means led him to abandon the project of forming a Community of Equality and Co-operation. Many of his lectures during these years were devoted to expounding his plan; the model of a Community quadrangle was still occasionally exhibited; and a picture of it formed the heading of his organ *The Crisis* (1832-4) during a great part of its career, though it was displaced for a time by a representa-

¹ The document in the Manchester Correspondence is undated, but is enclosed in a letter from R. D. Owen dated September 18, 1844. The letter, however, makes no reference to the document. See *Threading my Way*, p. 263.

tion of the National Equitable Labour Exchange. But he no longer devoted his entire attention to the endeavour to found such a Community. We hear no more of the national fund of £100,000: no bishops or statesmen were solicited to lend their names to committees for the purpose. He even discouraged the attempts of some of his followers towards action which he considered premature; and much dissatisfaction was caused by his opposing a scheme for founding a Community propounded at the Birmingham Co-operative Congress of October, 1831, and ultimately withdrawing his name from the committee. But this Fabian attitude was not wholly due to the lessons taught by the disastrous experience of New Harmony. During the years 1825-29, the greater part of which, as already shown, Owen had spent in America, the condition of things in this country had developed, and fresh opportunities for action of a congenial kind opened out before him.

We have traced in the preceding chapter the rise of the new Co-operative Societies. At the beginning of the year 1830 they numbered throughout the kingdom nearly three hundred;¹ and a year or two later had risen to between four and five hundred.² The British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge, founded in May, 1829, acted as the mouthpiece of these Societies: and during the greater part of the year 1830 two magazines, the *Co-operative Miscellany* and the *British Co-operator* appeared simultaneously in London; while the *London Co-operative Magazine* did

¹ Thompson, *Directions for Establishment of Communities*, prefatory note.

² *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 59 *bis* (June, 1832).

not come to an end until after March of the same year.

All these Societies recognised that they owed their existence to Owen's teaching and inspiration, and looked up to him as their founder and prophet. In the first number (January, 1830) of the *Co-operative Miscellany* there is an interesting editorial on the state of the country, in which the remedies for the existing distress put forward in the name of Malthus, the various proposals for the amendment of the currency, the political reforms urged by Hunt and Cobbett, are contrasted with the effectual and universal remedy taught by Owen. "Notwithstanding the influence of men and measures, other steps are actively moving onwards towards the diffusion of the views of Mr. Owen of New Lanark, which are now generally known as the principles of Co-operation. These principles breathe universal love of our fellow beings ; industry among all classes ; equality of privileges for all the human race ; peace and goodwill to all mankind ; the equal distribution of labour and wealth, and universal knowledge and happiness."

An enthusiastic co-operator, one James Burns, writing to Owen from Armagh, in June of the same year, to announce the formation of the first Armagh Co-operative Society, hails him as the great teacher of mankind. "The supreme merit is yours of devising a plan at once effectual, simple and stupendous, of rendering the natural selfishness of each the instrument of happiness to all. My soul is too full of admiration and gratitude for the goodness of your heart and the value of your labours to permit me to trespass any longer on your time by entering further into this glorious system."

The aims, methods, and aspirations of these Societies, as originally shaped by their first members, are clearly set forth in William Thompson's book, *Practical Directions for the Speedy and Economical Establishment of Communities*.¹ He defines the method of co-operation as "the voluntary union of the industrious or productive classes, in such numbers as to afford a market to each other, by working together for each other, for the mutual supply, directly by themselves, of all their most indispensable wants." But, he continues, "all have the intention of ultimately forming themselves into complete Co-operative Communities as soon as they shall have saved out of the profit of their trading fund . . . an additional sum sufficient to stock and rent the land necessary to afford them wholesome food." He proceeds to give directions to make the establishment of such Communities, by means of joint stock associations, "as easy as the establishment of any ordinary manufacture." The two bases of his ideal Community were

(1) "*Equal Distribution* ; that which affords to every individual equally exerting, or equally willing to exert, his or her faculties for the common good, equal means of physical, social and intellectual enjoyment." This equal distribution did not mean an equal amount of food and clothing for each individual ; but an amount "proportioned to the physical necessities of each."

And (2) "*Community of Property or Possessions*"—i.e. "that every adult person shall possess everything, that is to say, all the lands, houses, machinery, implements and other stock of the Community, in as ample a

¹ London, 1830.

manner as they are possessed by any other member whatever" (pp. 4, 5).

For the rest, the detailed arrangements of Thompson's model Community follow pretty closely upon the lines sketched out by Owen. The book contains a plan of the proposed quadrangle, to accommodate 2,000 persons, with minute instructions as to the domestic arrangements, the provision for sanitation, lighting and ventilation; the rotation of crops, the organisation of industry, and the intercourse of the sexes; together with suggestions for the regulation of the birth-rate.

That Thompson's book fairly represented the aspirations, at any rate of a considerable, and that the most articulate, section of co-operators at this period is evident from many references in the periodical literature and in Owen's private correspondence, and from the proceedings of the Co-operative Congresses. Thus J. Emerson, writing to Owen in February, 1831, to give an account of the spread of Co-operation in Ulster, says, "best of all there is a growing affection and brotherly love amongst our members, which is manifested more and more every day, so that the happy moment, the wished for object—community of property and interest—may not be so far distant as some would lead us to imagine."

At the first Co-operative Congress, held in Manchester in May, 1831, it was unanimously resolved, "That this Congress considers it highly desirable that a Community on the principles of Mutual Co-operation, United Possessions, and Equality of Exertion and of the means of Enjoyment shall be established in England as soon as possible" . . . and it was resolved further, upon the

plan laid down by Mr. William Thompson, "that immediate application be made to one hundred and ninety-nine other Co-operative Societies, in order to obtain their concurrence in the project of electing a member from each Society, and supplying him in such manner as they shall deem best with the sum of £30, in order that an incipient Community of two hundred persons, with a capital of £6,000, may immediately be formed in some part of England."¹

At the second Congress, held in Birmingham in October of the same year, the subject was under renewed discussion, and the name of Robert Owen was added to the Committee appointed to carry the scheme into effect. Owen, however, as already said, shortly withdrew his name; and was reproached by his more enthusiastic disciples with having done much to discourage the project.

At the third Congress, held in London, in May, 1832, the Birmingham Committee reported that their circular inviting subscriptions had met with a response in two instances only. The "First Birmingham" had paid a deposit of £6 for two shares; and the Kendal Society had expressed their intention of subscribing, but had not yet sent their deposit.² Partly, no doubt, this meagre response was due to the paralysing effect of Owen's secession; but the committee indicates what was probably the more potent cause—the Societies had already invested all the money they could spare in purchasing machinery and raw materials. From that date onwards we hear little for some years about the

¹ From a printed circular in the Manchester Collection.

² *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 23.

projected Community. The title page of *The Crisis*, indeed, from February to April, 1833, exhibited a representation of a Community building, and again from September, 1833, to April, 1834, a more ambitious design contrasting the picturesque squalor of the competitive system with the rectangular comfort of the new world. Efforts towards community still continued to be made by groups of individuals, and Societies still flourished, under such titles as "The Moral Union of the Friends of the Rational System of Society,"¹ for the purpose of training their members in the habits and principles requisite for life in a Community. William Thompson died in 1833, and in his will left £10,000 to some Socialist² trustees, for the purpose of founding a Community. The will, however, was contested by some of the creditors on the ground that the estate was insufficient to meet the claims upon it, and ultimately a Receiver was appointed. As we hear no more of the Trust Fund, it is to be presumed that the money was absorbed in meeting law costs and other liabilities.³

For most co-operators, however, the necessities of the moment, the mere stress of living, had for the time thrust the remoter ideal into the background. Some of the earliest Co-operative Societies, as we have seen in the last chapter, had been little more than

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 102, and elsewhere.

² The word was gradually coming into use in Co-operative Literature in the course of the years 1833 and 1834. Its first occurrence in this country is traced to a letter to the *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 24th, 1833. It had, however, made its appearance in France in the previous year (*Life of Owen*, by Dolléans, p. 204).

³ *Crisis*, Vol. IV., p. 56.

grocery stores. But the typical Society from 1830 onwards was an association of members of the same trade, who subscribed a small capital in order to purchase the necessary material for providing employment, in the first instance, for any of their members who might be out of work at the time, and ultimately of giving employment to the whole of their number. Owen's principles practically forbade competition, and there seems to have been no definite aim amongst the early productive co-operators of actually competing with ordinary capitalist enterprises. They were anxious simply that each man should receive the due reward of his labour.

In the first instance, no doubt, the Societies were able to dispose of the products of their industry locally, partly to the outside public, partly to members of kindred Societies. But very soon the need for a wider market became apparent, and Exchange Bazaars were formed, to which each Co-operative Trade Society sent up its surplus produce for sale. One of the first of these Exchange Bazaars was opened by the British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge at 19, Greville Street, Hatton Garden, in the early part of 1830.¹ At this time there were over forty Co-operative Societies in London alone,² from which the Bazaar could draw its supplies; and the North-West of England United Co-operative Society two years later had a store at which thirty Societies dealt.³ But shortly, under the inspiring influence of a great idea,

¹ *British Co-operator*, p. 47; Lovett's *Autobiography*, p. 42.

² See list in *British Co-operator*, p. 24.

³ *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 20.

the Exchange Bazaars reached an enormous development.

We have already, in the constitution of the proposed Cork Community, drawn up by William Thompson, and in the prospectus of the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Society,¹ met with the doctrine which underlay all the socialist and co-operative speculations of the time—that all wealth is the product of human labour, with its implicit assumption, that the only labour to be taken into account is the labour of the hands—the labour of the “industrious” or “productive” classes. The elaboration and wide dissemination of this belief throughout the democratic movement of 1830 and onwards was largely due to the writings of Thompson himself, Hodgskin, and other men who had come under Owen’s personal influence.²

It seems doubtful whether Owen, himself a master manufacturer, ever held the doctrine in its extreme form. But he was one of the first, in the *Report to the County of Lanark*, to propound, as a practical corollary to the doctrine of labour as the only source of wealth, that “the natural standard of value is human labour,” and to suggest the setting up, for purposes of exchange, of a standard labour unit.³ As already indicated, it was probably the public discussion which followed on the recommendations of Sir. R. Peel’s Committee for the resumption of cash payments which set Owen’s mind to work on the intricacies of the

¹ See above, pp. 381, 386.

² See *The Right to the Whole Produce of Labour*, Menger, with a preface by H. S. Foxwell, London, 1899; and Wallas’s *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 273, 274.

³ See above, Chapter xii., pp. 273-4.

currency question. At the time which we are now considering, 1830-34, the same causes were again at work. There was much debate on the part played by an inadequate currency system in causing or aggravating national distress; and Attwood, Cobbett, and indeed almost every leading reformer had his own particular remedy for the attendant evils.

It was natural, then, that the idea of a labour currency should be revived in connection with the transactions carried on at the Exchange Bazaars. The project had actually been given a trial in America. One of the members of the New Harmony Community, Josiah Warren, had after the collapse opened a Time Store at Cincinnati, at which all goods were exchanged in return for notes representing hours of labour.¹ From the fourth quarterly report of the British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge, published early in 1830, we learn that Owen, no doubt with Warren's experiment in his mind, had advocated the use of labour notes at the Greville Street Bazaar. The committee announce that, in lieu thereof, they propose to issue exchangeable receipts against the goods deposited, for "it is impossible for us to fix upon the exact average value of an hour's labour, or the necessary time required in different parts of the country by different workmen, until the whole of the labour of Co-operation goes into one Grand Bazaar, or National Bank of manufactures."²

¹ Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, p. 95. It will be remembered that the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association had suggested labour notes (see above, p. 386).

² *British Co-operator*, p. 47. The date of the Report is not given; nor the date of the periodical, but probably the latter date is April, 1830.

Early in 1832 William King, late editor of the Brighton *Co-operator*, who had for some time been an advocate of the principle, actually succeeded in establishing a Labour Exchange at the Gothic Hall, New Road.¹ By an advertisement in the fourth number of *The Crisis* (April 28, 1832) we learn that manufactured goods, raw materials or labour can be exchanged at the Gothic Hall "on an equitable time valuation."

Owen was not long in following the lead thus given. In an editorial in *The Crisis* for June, 1832,² the argument for Labour Exchanges is concisely set forth.

"Hundreds of thousands of persons of all the various trades in existence rise every morning without knowing how or where to procure employment. *They can each produce more than they have occasion for themselves, and they are each in want of each other's surplus produce. . . .* The usual course pursued by these different persons to obtain the produce of each other has been to convert their stock into money by disposing of it to a money holder, or middleman, and then exchanging the money for the articles they may require, either with the producer, or most generally to another middleman; but should there be a scarcity of money, or the middleman not feel inclined to take the produce offered, the producer must make a considerable sacrifice to obtain it, by giving a greater proportion of his produce before he can get possession of the articles he requires, thus being entirely dependent upon the middleman, who always obtains a profit by retaining a part of the pro-

¹ Lovett, p. 47.

² *The Crisis*, which started in April, 1832, was edited for the first twelve months by Robert Owen with the assistance of his son Robert Dale Owen.

duce for himself on every article that passes through his hands, to the manifest injury of the producer, who parts with his own produce at a disadvantage, and obtains that of another at an advanced price.

"Now there is no necessity for the middleman. Producers can do without him—they merely want to come in contact with each other, and they can exchange their respective produce to their mutual advantage, and to the advantage of the general consumer."

But a standard of value and a medium of exchange are needed.

"All wealth proceeds from labour and knowledge.

"And labour and knowledge are generally remunerated according to the time employed.

"Hence it is proposed to make *time* the standard or measure of wealth."¹

The new medium of exchange will therefore be noted representing time or labour value. For this new currency two properties are claimed.

(1) That it can be increased or diminished in amount in precise proportion to the increase or diminution of the wealth which it represents.

(2) That it will be unchangeable in value.

But Owen did not contemplate the immediate and entire reconstruction of our social and economic arrangements; he proposed to adjust his new standard to existing markets and rates of exchange. And the new standard could not be made to fit without some sacrifice of its original simplicity. The two crucial problems were how to reduce different kinds of labour, paid at various rates in the outside markets, to a common

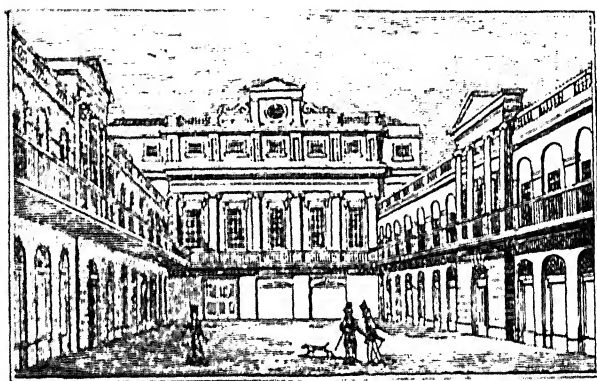
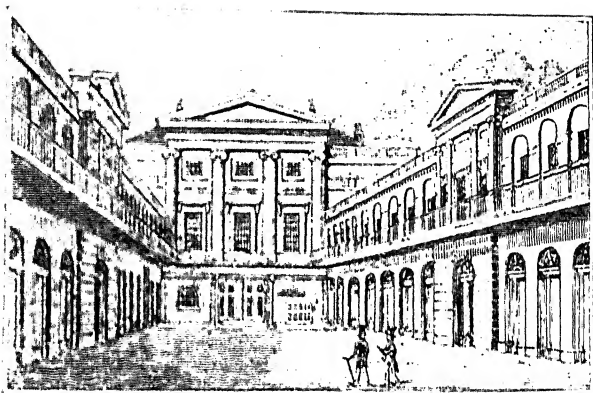
¹ *Crisis*, Vol. I., pp. 59, 60 *bis*.

denominator ; and how to measure the time-value of labour as embodied in the raw material. The actual time standard was arrived at as follows : The average day's labour was reckoned at ten hours, at the rate of 6*d.* an hour, these wages being taken as the mean between the wage of the best and the worst paid labour. And all rates of labour, together with the value of the raw material, were expressed in terms of this unit. Thus, to take an illustration, if a cabinet-maker, whose labour in the open market was paid for at the rate of 1*s.* an hour, brought a chest of drawers to the Equitable Labour Exchange to be valued, its price in labour hours would be computed as follows : First the value of the raw material would be set down in vulgar pounds, shillings and pence ; then the value of the labour would be added in the same base medium ; the whole would then be divided by 6*d.*, and the quotient would represent the number of hours to be entered on the labour note. This "time-standard," it will be seen, was hardly less a fiction than the "economic man" of another school of thinkers. Further, in actual practice a commission of 1*d.* in the shilling was charged to the depositor, to cover the working expenses of the Exchange. So that even the profits of the middleman were not wholly abolished.

Owen was at this time (June, 1832) in occupation of some extensive premises in the Gray's Inn Road, near King's Cross, which had been made over to him on terms unhappily of a rather indefinite character by the lessee, William Bromley, who was, or professed to be, an ardent admirer of the new system and its prophet. The premises were used as the headquarters of the

“Institution for Removing Ignorance and Poverty.” The building, a representation of which forms the head-piece of *The Crisis* throughout the first volume, was of considerable size, and built, like an old-fashioned inn, round a central courtyard, with an open gallery running all round at the level of the first-storey windows. It was therefore well adapted for the purposes of a bazaar and warehouse; and here, in fact, the National Equitable Labour Exchange was opened on Monday, September 17, 1832.

The deposits in the first few days were extraordinarily numerous, so much so that the pavement was blocked; and the stores became so congested that on the Thursday it became necessary to close the Exchange to the public for three days, to admit of the goods already deposited being properly arranged and priced. Gold and silver money was accepted in the first few days, so *The Crisis* exultingly records, only as bullion, and a small commission, as with other goods, was levied on the transaction. Thus 20s. 6d. in silver or 20s. 2d. in gold was received in exchange for forty labour notes of the nominal value of one pound sterling. Labour notes were accepted in payment for tickets at the social festivals given monthly at the Institution. Many tradesmen in the neighbourhood put up notices in their windows that labour notes would be taken in payment for their goods. It is said that some of the theatres were willing to accept them. E. Nash, writing to Owen in the middle of November, 1832, says that the toll-keeper at Waterloo Bridge accepted labour notes in payment of the toll; and Pare writes from Birmingham that the workmen at some large ironworks, who were



THE EQUITABLE LABOUR EXCHANGE.
Two views showing each end of the building, from woodcuts
in *The Times*.

only working half time, had expressed their willingness to accept labour notes in payment, if their masters would work full time and send the produce to the Bazaar. A few weeks later, however, Charles West, apparently then a clerk at the London Exchange, and subsequently secretary to the Birmingham Branch, writes to complain that he has to pay £5 for rent, and would like to receive £5 in cash, instead of in notes; he had not understood when he threw up a situation in the country, and came to London to take service in the Exchange, that he would be paid entirely in labour notes.²

So confident were Owen and his followers of the triumphant success of the experiment that on September 24, a week after the opening, Owen, addressing a crowded meeting of the "unproductive industrious classes—*i.e.* the shopkeepers and distributors generally, informed them that the Equitable Exchange would form a bridge over which society would pass from the present to another and a better state of things; and warned them to come over before it was too late. Robert D. Owen suggested that such of them as were willing to work might emigrate to New Harmony and learn a useful trade. Finally the meeting unanimously resolved "that a Committee be formed to take into immediate consideration the best mode of relieving the non-productive industrious classes from their present distress and from the anticipation of much greater suffering."³

But all did not work with perfect smoothness at the Institution. Great difficulty was experienced in arranging

¹ Manchester Correspondence, letter dated October 24, 1832.

² Letter of December 20, 1832, in Manchester Correspondence.

³ *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 119.

and valuing the ever-growing piles of goods deposited, and the Exchange once more had to close its doors for a few days to permit of stock-taking, and finally was forced to lay down a rule refusing to accept deposits of less than forty hours' value. There were complaints, too, against the system of valuing adopted. An anonymous tailor wrote to the *Times* stating that he had paid 36s. for cloth and trimmings wherewith to make a coat, and had taken it when made to the Exchange; after three days' delay he received labour notes representing 32s. in cash—less than the actual cost of the material.¹ To most persons it would have appeared probable either that a mistake had been made in the valuation, or that the complainant had not accurately stated the facts. But Owen would not accept either of these alternatives. He proceeded boldly to justify the transaction. A low valuation, he explained, had been purposely adopted in order to enable the Exchange to compete successfully with outside traders, as well as to attract outside custom. He adds, for the consolation of the aggrieved tailor, that if his coat had been appraised below its nominal value at outside rates, no real injury was inflicted upon him, since all other classes of goods in the store were appraised at the same low valuation, and his labour notes retained, therefore, the same purchasing power.² It is added, in a leader in *The Crisis* on the question, that it is understood that Mr. Owen's answer has given general satisfaction. It can hardly have given satisfaction to the tailor, who would, on Owen's own showing, have been in a better position if he had saved his labour and brought his 36s. in cash to the stores. Nor can it have

¹ *Times*, October 2, 1832.

² *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 123.

even much satisfaction to the shareholders and friends of the Exchange; for an Institution which apparently contemplated selling its goods below their cash value, not only to members, but to the outside public, could hardly be expected to maintain itself for long.

However, the week after another tailor wrote to say that his experience at the Exchange had been very different. He took there a coat and a pair of trousers, and received the full market price for his labour. Both coat and trousers, he adds, were misfits, and, presumably, unsaleable elsewhere.

Another difficulty was the supply of provisions. However, a merchant wrote from Southampton offering one hundred tons of pink-eyed potatoes, and expressed his willingness to accept labour notes in exchange. A baker undertook to supply bread to the Exchange, and to receive half cash and half notes in payment. Fruits and other provisions were purchased wholesale on similar terms, and retailed to the members in like manner.¹

Up to the end of the year the Exchange continued to transact an enormous business, the chief depositors being tailors, cabinet-makers and shoemakers. In the seventeen weeks ending December 22, 1832, the deposits represented 445,501 hours and the exchanges 376,166 hours, leaving a balance of stock in hand representing 69,335 hours—£1,733 7s. 6d.

A branch was started at the Rotunda in the Blackfriars Road on December 8, and in the first five weeks 2,759 hours were deposited and 16,621 withdrawn. At the end of the year, however, brought difficulties and

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. I., pp. 146, 149, 155.

and thither the business of the parent Exchange was transferred in May. The Exchange, however, seems to have been handicapped in its fresh start : and early in July it was announced that the undertaking would be transferred to a new management.¹ There had been formed, apparently in the early part of 1833,² a United Trades Association. The Societies which had joined the Association up to the beginning of May, 1833, comprised carpenters, shoemakers, painters, glaziers, cabinet- and chair-makers, hatters, tailors, brushmakers, brasswork founders, sawyers, and some others.³ The main object of these Societies, as explained in a report dated May 1, was to give employment to their out-of-work members. "Part of the funds of the Society [*i.e.* the individual Trade Society, not the Association] as at present raised by weekly loans of a shilling each member, is apportioned to the purchasing of material

remained in the hall when the Exchange was removed; and there were various alterations and repairs. The following account, undated, which appears in the Manchester Correspondence apparently relates to the *Gray's Inn Road* premises :—

		<i>Institution.</i>			
<i>Dr.</i>		£	<i>Cr.</i>		£
To Loans, viz.—			By fixtures		700
R. Owen, about	900		„ lamps		300
Charles Green	350		„ other personal property ...		500
Derby	100		„ rent paid in advance ...		160
Sundries	650		„ repairs, sunk, say ...		540
Labour Exchange	200				
		<hr/>			<hr/>
		£2,200			£2,200
		<hr/>			<hr/>

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 216.

² The first weekly meeting of Delegates reported in *The Crisis* is that for April 4, 1833. But this was not the first meeting of the Committee (*Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 105).

³ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 139.

at the wholesale market, procuring shop room, &c. The unemployed are then kept constantly at work. The goods they produce are sent to the Bazaar [probably the Bazaar at 19, Greville Street] there to be valued by persons elected by the Societies from among themselves." The men then received, in notes, or partly in notes and partly in cash, the value of their labour. From the weekly reports of the Delegates' Committee of the Association, it would appear that so long as the Labour Exchange furnished a ready market for their produce or the different Societies were able to exchange the products of their labour direct, they were able to find abundant work for their unemployed members. Thus on April 24 the Surrey Society (apparently a Society of mixed trades) reported that they had made a quantity of clothes for which they had received in exchange a quantity of leather; that they were going to build a workshop for the hatters, and were about to repair several houses, for which they were to receive coals in exchange. The Second Carpenters reported on July 4 that they had engaged to fit up a shop for the shoemakers, who had promised shoes in exchange. In fact on July 11 they reported that they had received shoes to the value of £4 12s.¹

But naturally the main business of the Societies was transacted not by direct barter with each other, but through the medium of the Bazaar, and later of the Labour Exchange. Thus the delegates of the First Carpenters report on June 27 that in the preceding week they had received in cash £3 1s. 8½d., in notes 502 hours, and had found employment for 12 of their members,

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 224.

who had worked altogether 38 days 6 hours. The Second Carpenters had employed five members for 167 hours.¹ A week later the Third Carpenters reported that they had been founded for two years and had a quantity of useful articles—sashes, doors, ladders, &c.—for disposal. The Tailors reported that they had more work than their members could undertake.²

The quarterly report of the First Carpenters (April-June) shows stock in hand of £78 18s.; total expenditure in labour, etc., £120; labour performed by out-of-work members for the Society, 325 days 9½ hours.³ A few weeks later the First Carpenters reported that they had more work than their members could undertake, and offered to give employment to outsiders.⁴

It was natural that these Societies, which formed no doubt the chief customers of the Exchange, should be entrusted with the management of the undertaking. The requisite organisation for the purpose already existed in the Committee of Delegates from the several Societies which had for some time past met weekly, occasionally under Owen's presidency.

As a first step towards the new régime an audit was taken of the affairs of the Exchange. The audit—the result of which was announced at a meeting held on July 17—revealed a deficiency in stock of 9,000 hours (=£225), due mainly, as Owen supposed, to loss by theft during the hurried departure from the Gray's Inn Road premises. Owen explained that he was unable to meet the whole deficiency himself, as he had already expended

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 205.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 270.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

all his available means in starting the original Exchange,¹ but he surrendered notes to the value of 1600 hours. About 900 hours were subscribed by other persons in the room. The new management then undertook to make arrangements for the gradual redemption of the old notes still outstanding.

The accounts for the first quarter (ending November 2, 1833) under the new management showed good results. The deposits amounted to 137,750 hours; the exchanges to 91,550, showing a balance of 46,200 hours. The total stock in hand, including the old stock, amounted to 58,900 hours, and the notes in circulation to 37,250 hours; so that there was a substantial balance on the right side. Moreover, the quarterly account of revenue and expenditure showed a profit of about £300.

<i>Receipts.</i>		<i>Expenditure.</i>	
Provisions	£1,429	Provisions	£1,115
Rent, subscriptions ...	67	Rent	148
Festivals and lectures	287	Charges	134
Commissions	243	Festivals and lectures	85
		Wages	250
	<u>£2,026</u>		<u>£1,741</u> ²

Over £200 of this profit, however, it will be seen, is derived from lectures and festivals, the entire receipts from which were made over to the committee by Owen. But the business proper is shown to be just self-supporting, which is all perhaps that could fairly be required. The deposits, it will be seen, averaged a little over 10,000 hours a week.

¹ His total expenditure according to his own statement (*New Moral World*, Vol. I, p. 401) amounted to over £2,500.

² *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 96.

The report for the week ending January 25, 1834, shows a sadly diminished business; the deposits numbered only 5,284 hours for the week, and the exchanges 4,468. But the stock in hand, 54,852 hours, shows a surplus of nearly 23,000 hours over the notes in circulation. A second quarterly account is promised, but delayed in order to admit of a proper stock-taking.¹ The second quarterly account never appeared, nor is the result of the stock-taking expressly stated. But in the following April² we have an account for the two months from February 1 to March 29, 1834, which shows a business shrinking at an accelerated rate. For the eight weeks the deposits amounted to only 19,223 hours, or less than 2,500 a week. During the same period the exchanges aggregated 25,148 hours. The stock in hand has shrunk from 54,800 to 34,443 hours, and shows now a surplus of about 8,000 hours only over notes. The undertaking is just saved from bankruptcy by the festivals and lectures, which again furnish a net profit of nearly £200. Groceries, it is noted, are now on sale at one-fourth notes and three-fourths cash. Early in August, 1834, an advertisement appears in *The Crisis*,³ asking for provisions of all kinds and various other articles to be delivered at the Association of the Industrious Classes, 14, Charlotte Street. No further notice of the undertaking appears in the pages of *The Crisis*. But two letters preserved amongst the Manchester Correspondence throw considerable light on the internal working of the Exchange.

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 216.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 24

³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

INTEGRITY.

INSTRUCTION

BRAND

STOREKEEPER of the DAY



TWO HOURS

OWI

GRAY'S INN, ROAD, LONDON: ESTABLISHED 1832.

Owen, who was absent in November, 1833, in the north of England on a lecturing tour on behalf of the Association, had written to S. Austin, originally Secretary of the Gray's Inn Road Institution, and apparently at this time an official of the Exchange under the new management, and also Owen's agent in his dealings with the Committee of the Exchange, to send him some money. Austin replies on the twentieth of the month that the Travelling Committee has at present no funds in hand; that the committee (*sc.* of the Labour Exchange) stopped payment last week, and have left him to pay a number of minor accounts for printing, etc., as best he could; further that they now dispute the terms of the agreement with Owen, and wish to back out of part of their payment to him for rent, etc. Last of all, Austin proceeds: "I should not have minded if the Committee had not stopped paying me, and they ought not to have done it, for the lectures and festivals have paid them nearly £100 (including notes), more than they would have paid me if they had acted up to their agreement. I have been determined, however, not to have anything disagreeable with them, and have therefore only stated the difficulties and urged them to make good their agreements."

On June 7, 1834, Austin writes to Owen that the affairs of the Exchange are in a very bad way:

"From the account now furnished, however, it appears that all the money which has been collected in every way has been expended, and that there remains a considerable debt, and as they are now entered upon the last quarter of the year during which it has been agreed they should hold the premises, perhaps they cannot do

better than call together their constituents, if they have any left, and state to them that, after having devoted their time and talents in the endeavour to make the Exchange succeed, they find there has been lost in the attempt no less a sum than £500, and therefore they purpose that the Notes should be all called in, all the claims paid off, and the whole concern wound up as soon as possible ; that they may be able to fulfill their agreement with you, to pay the Rent in sums of not less than £10 per week until the whole amount be paid, and at the end of the year deliver up the Premises to you in good and substantial repair."

In conclusion he urges Owen to take immediate steps to insist on a full account being rendered, and the strict fulfilment of the committee's engagements, since, he writes, the public are profoundly dissatisfied with the bad management of the committee, and the members of the committee are at variance with each other.

The rest is silence.

There is silence also over the ending of the numerous other Labour Exchanges of this period, and it is probable that all alike ended in disaster—with one exception. The Birmingham Branch of the National Equitable Labour Exchange was opened in July, 1833, with Robert Owen as Governor and Charles West as Secretary. It was carried on with more or less success until the middle of the following year and then, apparently owing to lack of support, it was resolved to wind up the affairs. In the result the whole of the debts and the original share capital were repaid and a surplus of £8 3s. 0½d. was handed over to the Birmingham General Hospital.¹

¹ The accounts are preserved in the Manchester Correspondence.

The chief causes of the failure of the Bazaars and Labour Exchanges of the period, according to William Lovett, who had himself for some months acted as store-keeper to the First London Association, were "religious differences, the want of legal security, and the dislike which the women had to confine their dealings to one shop. The question of religion was not productive of much dissension until Mr. Owen's return from America, when his Sunday morning lectures excited the alarm of the religious portion of the members, and caused great numbers to secede from them. The want of legal security was also a cause of failure, as they could not obtain the ordinary legal redress when their officers or servants robbed or defrauded them; the Magistrates refused to interfere on the ground of their not being legalised or enrolled Societies. The prejudice of the members' wives against their Stores was no doubt another cause of failure. Whether it was their love of shopping, or their dislike that their husbands should be made acquainted with the exact extent of their dealings, which were booked against them, I know not, but certain it was that they often left the unadulterated and genuine article in search of what was often questionable."¹

Lovett goes on to state that "when Mr. Owen first came over from America he looked somewhat coolly on these Trading Associations, and very candidly declared that the mere buying and selling formed no part of his grand Co-operative scheme."

In an autobiographical fragment written a year or two after the collapse of the Exchange, which reads almost

¹ Lovett, *Autobiography*, pp. 42, 43.

like a reply to Lovett's book, Owen defended his action in lecturing on Sunday as being the only day on which the working classes could conveniently attend. Further, he explains that it was not his own wish to start a Labour Exchange at the time and in the manner chosen. The experiment was forced upon him by impatient friends who were not sufficiently experienced or farsighted to realise that long and careful preparation was needed to ensure the success of such an enterprise.¹

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. I., pp. 396, 401.

CHAPTER XVIII

TRADE UNIONS AND REFORM

HIS advocacy and support of the Labour Exchanges formed but a small part of Owen's multifarious activities during the years 1830-34. Of the Co-operative Congresses, which, beginning at Manchester in May, 1831, continued thereafter for several years to hold half-yearly meetings at different large towns in England, we have already spoken. At most of these meetings Owen either presided or otherwise took a leading part in the proceedings. Moreover from 1830 onwards, he, William Pare, and other prominent co-operators made periodical lecturing tours, chiefly in the north of England, to confirm the faithful and to spread the good news amongst the unconverted.

But Owen's lectures were by no means confined to the provinces. In the years 1830 and 1831 he held several public meetings, in the "Freemasons' Tavern" and other public halls, at which he delivered addresses on the prevailing distress and the remedy offered by Co-operation. At a meeting held on October 5, 1830, he spoke, by exception, on the state of the Public Press.¹ In September, 1831, he was inviting Members of Parliament

¹ For notices of these meetings see *British Co-operator* (1830), pp. 29 and 146, and the Manchester Correspondence.

and others to serve on a committee for alleviating the distress then prevalent in Ireland. In 1830 he offered to lecture to the Royal Institution and to the Literary and Scientific Institution: both bodies politely declined the proposal. In June of the same year Bentley writes declining to undertake the publication of a book offered him by Owen, probably the *Lectures on an Entire New State of Society*, which were actually published this year by J. Brooks, an obscure printer in Oxford Street.

But Owen found full opportunity for expounding his views in the lectures on Sunday mornings which at this time formed a marked feature in his propaganda. In the first instance these lectures were delivered at the Mechanics' Institution, Southampton Buildings, apparently in connection with the "British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge," which had been founded in 1829. But this use of the Sunday proved obnoxious to some of the members, and Owen was forced to remove successively to the Sans Souci Institution, Leicester Square, to the Burton Street Chapel, Burton Crescent, and to the Bazaar in the Gray's Inn Road.¹ Meanwhile, however, a development of another kind was taking place. The British Association contained a number of working men and others who were more democratic than Owen and his middle-class followers. These men appear for the most part to have listened sympathetically to Owen's teachings: many of them, indeed, like Lovett and Hetherington, no doubt owed their first introduction to public life to the Co-operative Movement. But reforms

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 395.

were in the air, and the working-class element in Owen's London audiences were naturally drawn off into political propaganda. Lovett has told us how the "British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge" developed first into the "Metropolitan Trades Union" and then, in 1831, into the "National Union of the Working Classes and Others," a body which included amongst its objects "An Effectual Reform of the Commons House of Parliament" and "the repeal of all bad laws."¹

Owen of course never had any sympathy with political reforms as such : there is scarcely an allusion in his correspondence at this period to the Reform agitation. In his view, held consistently throughout his life, it was waste of labour to tinker at an obsolete constitutional machinery which the new moral order must so soon sweep into oblivion. But the National Union included in its ranks many friends and followers of his own : and he seems still to have maintained some connection with them, and to have been regarded by those outside as closely associated with their objects. The Union met at a hall in the Blackfriars Bridge Road called the Rotunda, which subsequently, under the name of the "Surrey Institution," became the home of the Surrey Branch Labour Exchange, as we have already seen. The rather noisy Radicals who met at the Rotunda, inspired partly by the Socialist doctrine of labour as the only source of wealth and Owen's teaching of the imminent advent of a new order of society, partly by the hope of political reform, became an object of terror alike to the more constitutional Radicals and to the Conservative and re-

¹ Lovett, *Autobiography*, p. 68 ; Wallas's *Life of Place*, pp. 269-72.

spectable classes generally. Place speaks of them as "loud and long talkers, vehement, resolute, reckless rascals";¹ and the *Times*, in its issue of March 28, 1831, publishes, under the heading "A hint to the Parish Officers for indicting the Rotunda as a disorderly house," an extract from a statute of George III. prescribing heavy penalties for opening a public debate on Sunday, to which admission was obtained by payment.

The ties between Owen and the Rotundanists, however, which appear at no time to have been very close, were soon to be relaxed still further as the movement of the working classes developed on political and democratic lines. Owen, in short, though he may have been at one time among their prophets, never became in any effective sense their leader. In fact he found his most convinced and most persistent followers at this time amongst the social strata just above the working classes. The "Association of the Intelligent and Well-disposed of the Industrious Classes for removing Ignorance and Poverty"—for such was the name of the body under whose auspices *The Crisis* was started in the spring of 1832—was essentially a middle-class organisation. The annual subscription to the Institution in the Gray's Inn Road, a guinea and upwards, was such as few working men could afford to pay. The price of the tickets for the monthly, which soon became weekly, festivals—3s., or 1s. 6d. to members—was clearly suited to the pockets of the comparatively well-to-do. And dancing, which formed a prominent item in the programme at the Institution, would at that time of national distress

¹ Wallas, *Op. cit.*, p. 273

and strenuous political activity have appealed to the British working man even less than at the present day.¹

Owen's aloofness from all the popular movements for liberty and constitutional reform can be traced to two main sources. In the first place he was aristocratic in his methods and the whole cast of his mind. He appears always to have conceived of reform as something imposed upon the mass of the people from above: throughout a life spent in the midst of a prolonged and partially successful struggle on the part of the people for liberty and political power, Owen never adequately realised the possibilities of a spontaneous movement for social betterment. This defect was no doubt proximately due to his own personal success as a master manufacturer in imposing a new moral order on his subordinates. But the true cause lay deeper; in Owen's conviction that there must be a radical change in circumstances, and that mankind must be made all over again, before there could be any hope of real and permanent reform; and in his inability to perceive that the most valuable of all forms of education is that self-education which men win for themselves in their struggles for freedom.

But in the second place Owen was too thorough-

¹ In a letter dated May 10, 1832 (Manchester Correspondence), W. King, writing from the Gothic Hall, deprecates the appearance of opposition to Owen. But he (King) is satisfied that the field is wide enough for both:—"Mr. Owen has now in full operation at Gray's Inn Road his useful lecturing Department—we hear he has friends enough to aid him in his *Dancing* Department, and we thought we could very well be spared to endeavour to do something in the Labour Department." There are other allusions in the Manchester Correspondence to the dancing.

going an idealist to submit to compromise of any kind. His social ideals were bound up with his religious views. He could tolerate no half-measures, none of the temporary shifts, the nice adjustments of means to ends, the give-and-take policy, which are essential to ordinary political or social reform. Owen could never rest content in a half-way house. He saw everything *sub specie eternitatis*—the eternal perfection as he conceived it. With an outlook of this kind, and the most absolute confidence in his own judgment, it will be readily understood that he found it difficult to work with others, and that others in turn were apt to find him self-willed, visionary and impracticable.

Thus in June, 1831, John Gray,¹ author of a *Lecture on Human Happiness*, and one of the little band of thinkers of this date to whom we owe the formulation of the Socialist creed, writes to the secretary of the London Co-operative Society—in other words to the official exponent of Owen's system :

“I received three or four days since a printed circular, entitled ‘*Outlines of the Rational System of Society*,’ detailing the moderate number of seventy-eight propositions, upon which I take it for granted mankind are to agree previous to the commencement of that new era when ‘*Moral and Physical evil*’ are to be no more.

¹ On August 5, 1823, Gray had written to Owen that, being about to publish a work on Political Economy, “it has been a matter of some surprise to me to learn that at the “City of London Tavern” last week the same ideas were in some instances expressed almost in the same words by you, as I had written twelve months before.” Fearing therefore to be accused of plagiarism, he writes to Owen to learn more of his views.

"I view with unfeigned regret a Society, now numerous and powerful, if I am rightly informed, pursuing with unabated energy the phantoms of theology, and endeavouring to make converts to unpopular religious or moral creeds the millions of Society who are now and ever ready to embark their persons and property in any practical and practicable method of improving their condition.

"What has the eternal doctrine of 'necessity' to do with roast beef? Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian? And will not a Jew *work* that he may eat? Assuredly he will. Teach him then to do the work that he may eat instead of working that others may eat for him. You do not understand your own principles, else you never would have divided into seventy-eight parts that which may be put into a nutshell."

He concludes his letter by wishing his correspondent a happy deliverance "from the religious mania with which you are at present afflicted."¹

Owen's religious—or anti-religious—views, and his constant advocacy of them in season and out of season, formed, it may be said, a serious stumbling-block to his followers and well-wishers throughout his later career.

Again, the leaders of the National Political Union, which was founded at Birmingham chiefly through the

¹ Manchester Collection, letter of June 18, 1831.

agency of Attwood, the Radical banker, in 1831, to press forward the Reform Bill, were anxious that Owen, and all that Owen represented, should join with them. The secretary writes to Owen in April, 1832, to ask for a "short summary" of his opinions—a thing at no period of Owen's life within the bounds of the possible—and mentions that there were already seven thousand members in the Union. In the following month William Pare writes to urge upon Owen the importance of making the Gray's Inn Road Institution of a more popular character, on the model of the Political Union; and Bronterre O'Brien, the well-known Chartist, writes at length to the same purport:—

"To you who know human nature so well, and whose writings afford abundant evidence that you are as well conversant with the nature of existing governments, I need not say that these governments have ultimately no other basis of support than public opinion. Be they ever so complicated or simple, be they monarchical or Republican, they stand or fall, move retrograde or forward, solely in obedience to Public Opinion. It is therefore of vital importance to gather up this Public Opinion, to concentrate it on the social system and make it bear irresistibly on the government, by the weight, unity of direction, and simultaneous action of all its parts. With this view I respectfully suggest that the Association in Gray's Inn Road should be made of a more popular character. I would in fact recommend you to take the Birmingham Union as your model so far as organisation is concerned. . . . I would admit all persons as members who paid 1s. per quarter or

upwards, in order to secure the attendance of great numbers of the working classes at the lectures, council meetings, etc. I conceive that by proper arrangements you might get from five to ten thousand members. . . . If these and like duties [*i.e.* of the Council of the Association] were performed judiciously, and your own peculiar opinions on Religion, Responsibility, etc., kept in the background, at least for a short time, I believe we could very soon, to use the language of Mr. Attwood, roll up such a massive power, such a giant strength, as would be perfectly irresistible.

"I have said, my dear Sir, that I think the present time most auspicious. I think so because the suffering and deluded people are fast recovering their senses, sick and weary as they are of Public meetings, Reform discussions, Speechmaking and all that sort of thing; there are already hundreds, perhaps thousands in this very town,¹ who have wit enough to perceive that this boasted Reform Bill will not bring them the good they once expected from it. As respects my allusion to religion, responsibility, etc., I beg you to understand me not as pleading indulgence for my own prejudices, but for those of others. If I mistake not, your ideas and my own are the same, or nearly so, on these subjects—but the people, the unhappy, the ignorant, the debasingly superstitious people are *frightfully sensitive* and, if you like, *insane* on these points."²

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that, in spite

¹ Birmingham.

² Manchester Collection, letter of May 27, 1832.

of the adroit compliment with which the letter opens, the appeal was unsuccessful.

In September of the same year we find articles in Bronterre O'Brien's paper, the *Poor Man's Guardian*, complaining that Owen and the leading co-operators were not in favour of enlarged political rights for the masses ; "they seek every opportunity to speak sneeringly and contemptuously of their possession as a consideration of no value." The writer went on to maintain that this was not only bad policy on the part of the co-operators, but a dishonest attempt to try to win favour with the aristocracy by depreciating the rights of man. The attempt was bound to fail because the ruling classes would never yield to anything but political pressure. Owen might be assured that "the Government will not interfere with his plans so long as they promise to be impotent for good or evil : but let fortune once favour him—let success once smile on his endeavours—let what is now 'visionary and chimerical' once become of practical benefit to the workmen at the expense of the upper and middle classes, and then we shall soon see whether Mr. Owen's disciples will not find to their sorrow what it is not to have a parliament of the people."

O'Brien himself found it necessary to defend Owen from the charge of being in collusion with the Government, or having any personal ambition to serve in his attempt to divert popular attention from Radicalism to Co-operation. Owen, he says, is unquestionably honest, but mistaken. Let Owenites, instead of pursuing a vain dream, join with the Radicals in securing political rights for the mass of the people, and thus "help to

establish for the workman dominion over the fruit of his own industry.”¹

In the *Guardian* of September 22 is an account of a debate held at the Gray's Inn Road Institution between the Owenites and the National Political Union of the Working Classes, on Co-operation *versus* Political Rights as a means of immediately benefiting the working classes, at which Hetherington and Cleave were the chief speakers on behalf of the National Political Union.

Owen's attitude to another popular movement at this time shows his inability to work for a half-way measure. He could not submit to accept the millennium in instalments. There had been from 1830 onwards a strong and well-organised agitation led by Richard Oastler, John Doherty, G. S. Bull, and in Parliament by Sadler and Fielden, for a ten hours' day for factory operatives. But Owen was impatient at the slow progress of an agitation conducted on constitutional lines ; already the movement had gone on for more than three years, and Parliament had not yet consented to enforce even a ten hours' day.² He announced a meeting at Manchester for November 25, 1833, in favour of an eight hours' day, and invited Oastler and others to attend. Oastler in his reply, dated

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, 1st and 29th of September, 1832. The *Guardian* represented at this time the movement which afterwards became known as the Chartist movement. The four leading points, as enumerated in the issues from which the quotations in the text are made, were Universal Suffrage, Short Parliaments, Voting by Ballot, and abolition of property qualification.

² Hobhouse's Bill, as passed in 1831, limited the hours for young persons to twelve a day ; and Sadler's Ten Hours' Bill, introduced in the shortlived Parliament of 1831-2, had failed to get beyond a Select Committee.

November 22 (Manchester Correspondence), declines the invitation:—

“We are of opinion that our attending at Manchester on Monday evening would do harm instead of good. We have no delegated powers. Our Delegates’ Meeting sanctioned the 10 hours’ Bill, and our Local Committees have done the same, and the only power to alter (as stated at Mr. Bull’s on Monday), rests with the Public Meeting. If we were to turn aside from the resolutions of the Delegates’ and Committee meetings, we should deservedly lose the confidence of the operatives. . . . I shall never argue against an 8 hours’ bill, I have often declared 8 hours long enough, to the people at Public Meetings. I still think so, and that children ought not to work at all. But the people must drive me by the majorities at Public Meetings from the 10 to the 8 hours’ Bill.”

The meeting was nevertheless duly held, and there was formed a “Society for promoting National Regeneration,” whose object was to secure an eight hours’ day for all classes, with the same amount of wages as that paid for the present day’s work. Owen himself was convinced that the desired object could be obtained by mutual agreement between the men and the masters, and was confident of his ability to convince the employers that their true interest lay in compliance. The committee of the new organisation included, besides Owen, John Fielden, M.P., John Doherty, Hodgetts, Philip Grant, and others who had already taken a prominent part in the agitation for shorter hours. A resolution was passed urging Oastler, Wood, Bull and

Sadler to drop the ten-hour project and unite forces with the newly formed Society, and Owen was requested to form branches in the towns which he was to visit in the course of his lecturing tour.¹

Branches were actually established in London, Sheffield, Bradford, and elsewhere. But the movement effected little; Oastler and Bull for sufficient reasons declined to join; the Trade Unions showed a certain jealousy of Owen's interference;² and finally Ebenezer Elliott and four other members of the Sheffield Branch addressed in January, 1834, a remarkable Memorial to Owen, in which they explained in temperate language their reasons for declining any longer to co-operate with him. The Memorial begins with a warm tribute to Owen's personal qualities:—

“KIND AND DEAR SIR,

“You came amongst us—a rich man amongst the poor—and did not call us rabble. This was a phenomenon new to us. There were no sneers on your lips, no covert scorn in the tones of your voice; you met us as a fortunate brother ought to meet his affectionate but suffering brethren.”

The Memorial then proceeds to argue, first, that the prime necessity of the working classes is cheap food—the abolition of the Corn Laws. Second, that a wholesale reduction in the hours of labour must inevitably lead to a reduction of wages:—“It is impossible to get the same wage for eight hours' labour

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 117.

² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

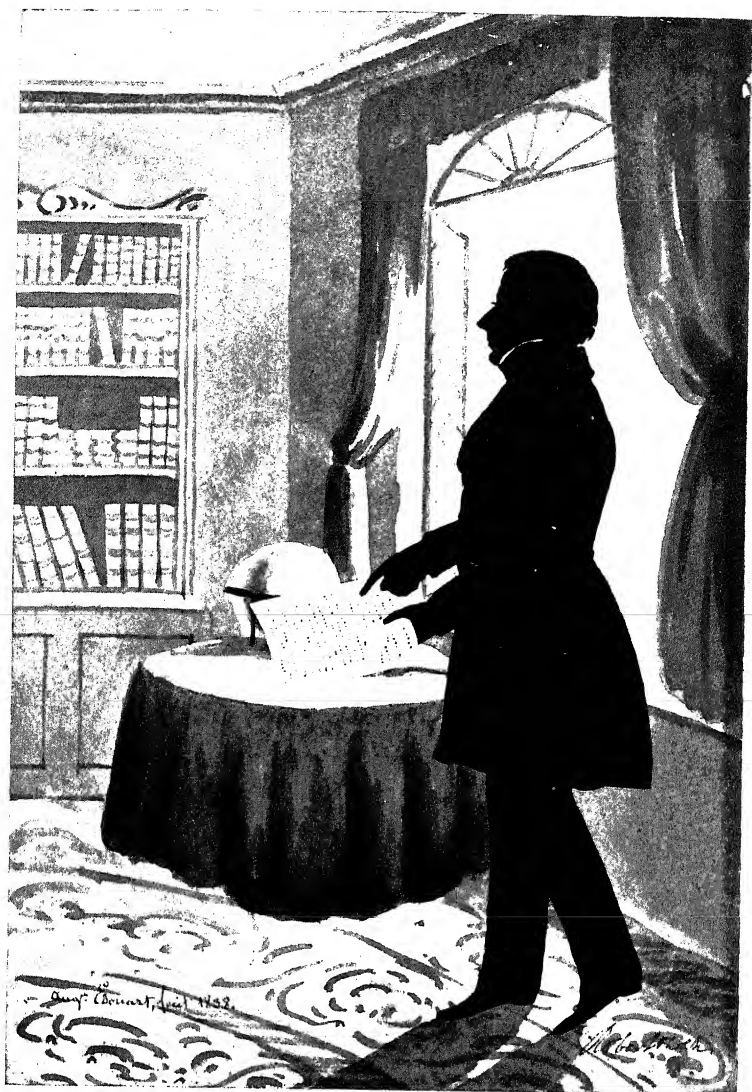
as for 12, without robbery of some kind," or, which would be equally disastrous, a greatly enhanced price. "You tell us that your object is to compel idlers who consume wealth to pay a higher price than they do now for our productions. But you do not tell us how we can compel purchasers to buy our goods dear, when they can buy other goods cheap"—abroad.

In a word Owen's diagnosis of the evil was faulty, and his suggested remedy, if practicable, would only aggravate the disease.

After this manifesto the National Regeneration Society appears to have passed into oblivion.¹

One more illustration may perhaps be given of Owen's methods of public work. Lovett tells us that, prior to the meeting of the Third Co-operative Congress, which was held in London, at the Gray's Inn Road Institution, in May, 1832, a circular was issued inviting the attendance of Members of Parliament and others. "Mr. Owen having seen a copy of the circular drawn up conceived that it did not sufficiently express his peculiar views. He therefore sent an amendment, which he wished added to it, on to our meeting by Mr. J. D. Styles. The Committee having discussed the amendment rejected it, and then sent the circular on to Mr. Hetherington's to be printed. When Mr. Owen heard of that, he sent Mr. Bromley, the proprietor of the Exchange Bazaar, to tell Mr. Hetherington that his amendment must be added. This at first Mr. Hetherington refused to do, but on Bromley swearing that the Congress

¹ The Memorial, which originally appeared in the *Sheffield Iris*, is reprinted in *The Crisis* for February 1, 1834 (Vol. III., pp. 186, 187).



From an unpublished drawing by A. Edouart, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

ROBERT OWEN, 1838.

should not meet at his place unless he did add it, he began to think it a very serious affair, as the meeting was to take place in a few days : we had incurred great expenses, and had no means of taking another place. He therefore told Bromley that if Mr. Owen wrote him a letter authorising him to insert it, and took the blame on himself, he would add the amendment. Judge therefore of our great surprise when the circulars were brought to our meeting embodying the rejected amendment. After Hetherington's explanation it was resolved that a deputation consisting of Messrs. Lovett, Flather and Powell be appointed to go and expostulate with Mr. Owen. We went, and were shown into Mr. Owen's room at the Bazaar, and after briefly introducing our business, he told us to be seated, as he had something very important to read to us. This something was the proof of a publication just started, called *The Crisis*. After he had read to us a large portion of what he had written in it, I found my patience giving way, and at the next pause I took the opportunity of asking him what this had to do with the business we had come about ? I began by telling him of his having submitted an amendment to our circular, of the Committee's rejecting it by a large majority, and of his taking upon himself to authorise its insertion in the circular notwithstanding : and concluded by asking him whether such conduct was not highly despotic. With the greatest composure he answered that it evidently was despotic : but as we, as well as the Committee that sent us, were all ignorant of his plans, and of the objects he had in view, we must consent to be ruled by despots till we had acquired sufficient knowledge to govern

ourselves. After such vain-glorious avowal, what could we say but to report—in the phraseology of one of the Deputation—that we had been flabbergasted by him.”¹

But one important phase of Owen’s activities during these years remains to be dealt with. As we have seen, there had sprung up under the influence of his teaching a large number of Societies of working men. Originally founded as nurseries for future communists, many of these Societies at the time at which we have now arrived, 1832 and onwards, had become simply small trading groups, or small groups of producers, associated together for their own immediate benefit, and especially to provide work for those of their number who might be out of employment and relief for the sick. In other words they discharged the functions now performed by the sick and benefit funds of a Trade Union. Gradually, too, they had changed their type. At the outset the Co-operative Societies had been miscellaneous associations of men of different trades. But as time went on, and the millennium delayed its coming, it was found more convenient and more immediately profitable for members of one trade to associate together; and as we have seen in the previous chapter, most of the Societies represented in the United Trades Association consisted of individuals belonging to the same trade—carpenters, tailors, cabinet-makers, etc. These Trade Unions, for such in fact they were, had in London, under the immediate influence of Owen’s pacific teaching, pursued for the most part a non-aggressive policy. But the years 1832-4 were full of wars and rumours of wars in the industrial

¹ Lovett’s *Autobiography*, pp. 48, 49.

world. The Reform Bill had passed into law, but had failed to bring with it an appreciable instalment of the millennium ; and much of the popular energy which had been engaged in securing the triumphal passage of the Bill was now diverted into militant Trade Unionism. Though Owen himself always looked for a peaceful settlement of all industrial crises by means of an equitable understanding between masters and men, it is probable that his teachings were largely responsible for the aggressive attitude of the working classes during these years. The doctrine of labour as the only source and measure of wealth, a doctrine embodied by him in the concrete form of labour notes, and continually emphasised by the sharp distinction drawn by the Owenites between the productive and the non-productive, —if occasionally industrious—classes, formed the basis of all working-class reasoning in economic subjects at this time.¹

The militant Trade Union movement of 1832-4 owed therefore much of its original impulse to Owen. Moreover, many who had received their original training in public affairs as co-operators in one or other Owenite Society became afterwards prominent in the Trade Union movement. And Owen himself made a bold attempt to capture the whole movement at the outset of the strikes of 1833, and to direct the energies of

¹ Amongst the Manchester Correspondence is the rough draft of a Catechism for use at the founding of the Metropolitan Auxiliary Lodge of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. One of the questions in this document runs : "Do you fully acknowledge that labour is the source of all wealth ? And that those who labour have an unimpeachable right to secure to themselves, and for their own disposal, all its benefits and advantages ?"

the unionists into the peaceful channels of co-operation. Pare, Styles and other Co-operative missionaries were constantly on tour through the provinces at this time, lecturing and generally advancing the propaganda. The Manchester Correspondence of 1833-4 contains many letters from Owen's followers at Birmingham, Manchester, Worcester and elsewhere relating their efforts to convert the nascent Unions to their faith, and urging Owen to come down in person to help the cause. Thus G. Marshall writes from

"MANCHESTER, *July 6th*, 1833.

"DEAR SIR,

"We think it highly important that you should contrive to visit Manchester with the least delay, for your Lectures at this time will doubtless have more effect than they would have had at an earlier period, and perhaps such a favourable opportunity of making converts may not offer again in our time.

"You are aware that the trades unions are becoming almost established throughout the United Kingdom, and the fountain head of the Lodges is in Manchester; the Leaders in these Unions are partly co-operators, and they say they will obtain the Mechanics' Institution for you to lecture in, and that you shall have an impartial hearing if you will favour them with a lecture. The Trades Unions, I am told, receive more than £1,000 per week, they expended more than £100 last week in missionaries alone. The Joiners, Masons, Bricklayers, and indeed all connected with building are now out of work, and the Unions throughout are looking to Manchester; these parties are anxious to hear further on Labour exchange,

and have now leisure and inclination to acquire further information.

“ You may rely upon it that this is the best possible time for you to come out in Manchester ; you are highly respected here by those who think different to us, and we have here many active co-operators who are furnishing the leaders of the Unions with such knowledge as we possess on Labour exchange, ‘ The Crisis,’ &c.

“ GEORGE MARSHALL.”

Invitations to Owen to lecture were received in August of this year from the Liverpool Central Committee, and from the Grand Committee of the Manchester and Birmingham Delegates at Birmingham.

Again, W. Wilks writes from Worcester on August 16 relating his efforts to interest the Unions in Labour Exchanges : “ We waited upon the Shoemakers on Monday night last, and they are very eager to commence one, and intend to send shoes to Birmingham and have grindery in return, as soon as they have funds sufficient. After that we waited upon the Glove-cutters Union, who received us very favourably : some seemed to object to you on account of your Religion.”

The objection does not seem to have deterred the Glovemakers from embarking on a co-operative enterprise which shortly after ended in disaster ; for fifteen months later, on November 5, 1834, we have a letter from the same correspondent, intimating his intention to come to London to lay before Owen the whole affairs of the glove manufactory. The manufactory has now, it appears, been closed ; the stock has been sold at a loss ; and £40 is still owing to Mr. Wilks, “ the particulars of

which I will show you when I come, as I know it is your wish that no individual shall meet with any pecuniary loss owing to the part he has taken in our cause."

In letters of about the same period from two Birmingham correspondents—Joseph Hansom and Edward Welch, both architects—we have a still more ambitious scheme adumbrated. There was at this time, the summer of 1833, an extensive strike amongst the building trades in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and elsewhere. The Owenite scheme in brief was that the men should themselves make and sell bricks, and undertake building contracts on their own account. Thus Hansom writes on August 18, 1833. "... There are 800 men at a rough guess concerned in the Manchester Strike. We calculate that 10s. per week per head would maintain them in work if a provision store be established from whence rations could be distributed to them for labour notes. . . . If they make their own bricks and could arrange with the Colliers' Union for coals to burn them with, little if any more of cash would be wanted than the £400 per week, and in one month so much of capital would be accumulated as would be worth at least 8 times the sum. Some idea of this is now sown in the minds of our 8 confederates of this morning, and from the avidity with which they receive the principle I expect it to shoot out a wonderful tree in a few hours."

On the 23rd, after interviewing some delegates from the Manchester strikers and failing to persuade them, Hansom writes again, suggesting that the unionists at Birmingham should carry out the contract for building the

Grammar School there. Unfortunately, the Governors require securities to the extent of two-thirds of the amount of the contract—and the Owenites have no money to spare. “But the Governors,” he adds, “cannot carry on the work without us : either they must come to terms with the unionists or the works must be stopped.” A third course was found in the event. On August 24—the day following this letter—Messrs. Walthew, the principal builders in the town, discharged all their men who were members of the Union, and shortly afterwards took up the contract for building the Grammar School. On September 6, Edward Welch writes to Owen, stating these facts, and furnishing a copy of a manifesto, drawn up by himself, which he trusts the several lodges of the Union will adopt. This document, which was addressed to Mr. Walthew, ran as follows :—

“We the delegates of the several lodges of the Building Trades—elected for the purpose of correcting the abuses which have crept into the modes of undertaking and transacting business—do give you notice that you will receive no assistance from the working men in any of our bodies to enable you to fulfill an engagement which we understand you have entered into with the Governors of the Free Grammar School to erect a New School in New Street unless you comply with the following conditions.

“Aware that it is our labour alone that can carry into effect what you have undertaken we cannot but view ourselves as parties to your engagement, if that engagement is ever fulfilled ; and as you had no authority from us to make such an engagement, nor had you

any legitimate right to barter our labour at prices fixed by yourself, we call upon you to exhibit to our several bodies your detailed estimates of quantities and prices at which you have taken the work, and we call upon you to arrange with us a fixed per centage of profit for your own services in conducting the building, and in finding the material on which our labour is to be applied.

“Should we find upon examination that you have fixed equitable prices which will not only remunerate you for your superintendence but us for our toil, we have no objections upon a clear understanding to become parties to the contract ; and will see you through it, after your having entered yourself a member of our body, and after your having been duly *elected* to occupy the office you have *assumed*.”

It does not appear whether this manifesto was actually adopted by the Lodges : but it is sufficiently characteristic of the temper and reasoning of the Unionist pronouncements of this date. The Operative Tailors, in a circular dated April 25, 1834, announce to their employers that with a view to stay the ruinous effects of commercial competition they have resolved to introduce some new regulations into that trade, to come into operation on Monday next : the circular proceeds :—

“It only remains for me to add, that your workmen, members of this Society, will cease to be employed by you, should you decline to act upon the new Regulations ; and further, I think it right to apprise you that, in that case, they will no longer consider it necessary to support your interest, but will immediately enter upon

the arrangements prepared by the Society for the employment of such members for the benefit of the Society.”¹

As a matter of fact a Grand National Guild of Builders was actually founded and set to work on building a Guild Hall in Birmingham. On February 23, 1834, Hansom writes that the Guild Hall is nearly completed—the men have found the labour and Hansom himself has spent a considerable sum in materials. More he cannot afford, and he appeals to Owen to find the sum—about £500—still lacking to complete the work. Owen was apparently unable to help, and the building was eventually finished by the landlord, and still exists as a metal warehouse in Shadwell Street.²

But Owen was not content with the gradual conversion or permeation of the nascent Trade Unions. In the autumn of the year 1833 he outlined a scheme of a more ambitious kind. Lecturing at the Charlotte Street Institution on the evening of Sunday, October 6, he made the following portentous announcement: “I now give you a short outline of the great changes which are in contemplation and which shall come suddenly upon Society, like a thief in the night. . . . We have long since discovered that as long as Master contends with Master no improvement, either for man or master, will be possible: there is no other alternative, therefore, but national companies for every trade. . . . All trades shall first form associations or parochial lodges, to consist of a convenient number for carrying on the business.”

¹ Manchester Correspondence.

² Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 117; and Manchester Correspondence.

These parochial lodges should send delegates to county lodges, and so on up to the Grand National Council. "This is the outline for individual trades—they shall be arranged in companies or families: thus all those trades which relate to clothing shall form a company, such as tailors, shoemakers, hatters, milliners and mantua-makers; and all the different manufactures shall be arranged in a similar way; communications shall pass from the various departments to the grand national establishment in London. No secret shall be kept from public knowledge; any information respecting costs and profit shall be freely communicated, and that shall be done by a Gazette."¹ In a more detailed exposition of the scheme two or three days later to the Sixth Co-operative Congress, which met under his presidency at the Institution, Owen made it clear that he contemplated a Union not only of operatives, but also of masters and manufacturers, and ultimately of the Government itself.²

In effect there was founded early in 1834 under Owen's auspices, and apparently with Owen himself as Grand Master of Auxiliary Lodges, a "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland," which in a few weeks' time is stated to have enrolled something between half a million and a million members.³ The Grand National, which caused profound alarm amongst the propertied classes, had but a brief career.

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., pp. 42, 43.

² *Crisis*, Vol. III., pp. 62, 63. To criticise this scheme from the standpoint of ordinary economics would be to break a butterfly upon a wheel. But any reader who desires it will find the economic fallacies of the scheme set out in Mr. Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 145 *seqq.*

³ *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 120, 123; *Crisis* for February, 1834.

The conviction in March, 1834, of the six Dorsetshire labourers¹ united all the Unions for a time in a common protest against the shameful sentence. The Grand National organised a monster procession to present a petition against the sentence. The procession, some thirty thousand strong, marched, accompanied by Owen, to the Home Office on April 21, 1834, but Lord Melbourne refused to receive the deputation.² The effect produced by the energetic action of the Government did, no doubt, much to hasten the collapse of the movement. Some costly and unsuccessful strikes followed, and by the middle of 1834 many unionists longed for peace. On June 14 W. R. Wood, a prominent member of the Grand National, writes to Owen from Hanley suggesting that a letter from him to Simpson, an influential member of the Potters' Union, might at this juncture have the effect of bringing over the whole of that Union, eight thousand strong, to the cause of consolidation and Co-operation. The writer adds—

¹ The Unions of those days—as the name “Lodges” applied to the local branches testifies—were founded on the model of Masonic and other secret societies, with oaths and imposing initiation ceremonies. The oaths and ceremonies, however, had about as much significance as the banners and quaint titles in use amongst the *Oddfellows* and *Foresters* at the present time. But the Government was searching for an opportunity to break up the power of the Unions. An old Act of George III., which made the administering of illegal oaths a penal offence, was brought into action, and the six Dorsetshire labourers were punished for their innocent mummery with seven years' transportation. (See Walpole, *History of England*, Vol. III., pp. 439, 440.)

² Melbourne always remained on friendly terms with Owen personally. In the Manchester Correspondence there is a letter from him, dated April 2 (two or three weeks before the procession), representing to Owen that the action of the unionists in “these displays of force” (the particular occasion referred to by Melbourne was a funeral procession) would ultimately lead to contention and bloodshed.

“P.S. Mr. S. informs me on his inspection of the accounts of the Potters since the 12th of August last they have expended the enormous sum of £6,223 2s. 11d. in futile strikes, which if it was not experience would be decided waste to them; but the popular feeling now arising is for employing themselves, and it appears they are just now about commencing to work at a very large establishment of their own.”

Again, on May 8 of the same year, Samuel Sansome writes from Sutton-in-Ashfield to ask Owen about the prospects of Co-operation. The letter, apart from the evidence which it affords of the growing weariness of strikes amongst a section of the working classes, gives a most vivid picture of the slavery from which they were endeavouring to escape. The writer asks first whether “the Union of which we are members (the National Consolidated, I mean) is about to be placed under other arrangements, viz., your projected System of Co-operation—if so we shall Hail the Glad Day as the First of the Glorious Age when Delusion and misery shall give place to Truth and Happiness, when the poverty-stricken and Hard-working Millions shall emancipate themselves and posterity from the unjust and Tyrannical System of Competition carried on under the present unnatural state of Society.

“Worthy Sir, we have in the village in which I reside, viz., Sutton-in-Ashfield, near Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, had ample opportunity of experiencing most of the evils Concomitant on the System. Ours is a Populous Village having 5,000 Inhabitants, and in the parish 1,800 Stocking-Frames which are in the employ

of persons termed by us Bagmen, who obtain material for Manufacture, such as Silk and Cotton, from the wholesale Hosier at Nottingham or Elsewhere, and Deliver it to the workman to be wrought into Plain and Fancy goods, oftentimes reserving to themselves an Exorbitant profit on the goods, never less than 1s. in the £1, but in General to our perfect knowledge from 2s. to 8s. in the £1, and in many instances in Silk goods Cent. per Cent. But we have other things to complain of—these same Bagmen being Dealers in Common Necessaries of life deal them out to the workmen in defiance of the Law at such an enormous profit that in a Few years have sprang up a most amazing number of Shopocrats, one having in 20 years realized property to the amount of £6,000 ; another in 10 years £4,000 ; many others from £1,000 to £2,000 or £3,000 in about 14 or 16 years—all these persons being other Trades previously to their becoming Shopkeepers and Bagmen, such as Shoemakers, Staymakers, Weavers, Tailors, and Carpenters, etc., who are always upon the outcry against us if we attempt anything that appears Calculated to better our woeful condition. Nevertheless, we have attempted from time to time, by uniting ourselves, to protect our Trade with some small Advantage to ourselves (we at this time belong to the National Consolidated), and being convinced from woeful experiences that strikes amongst us will not Insure any Permanent advantage to us, and being in possession of £100 and upwards, the remains of our late Local Union Fund, have resolved to appropriate it to a different purpose, and we have taken a Commodious Building on a Lease for 5 years at Rent of £10 per Annum, and Believing that knowledge is power, shall

appropriate the upper room, 13 yards by 6, to the purposes of a school, lecture-room, etc., the lower part the same Dimensions as a warehouse, etc., with a house adjoining to commence Trading on the Co-operative and Equitable exchange principle; and understanding from the report of your discourse on the 27th instant that the Union, of which we Understand you have accepted the Leadership that [*sic*] the Co-operative System will be adopted by the Union, we shall embrace the cause with satisfaction, pledging ourselves to assist our Brothers in Union."

In the beginning of August, 1834, a special meeting of delegates of the Grand National met in London under Owen's presidency. After setting forth that the Union had "experienced much more opposition from the employers of industry and from the wealthy portion of the public, as well as from the Government, than its promoters anticipated," they resolved that the name should be changed to "The British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity and Knowledge"; that all secrecy be abandoned and that the initiatory ceremony be amended so as to conform with the law of the land; that effective measures should be adopted to reconcile the masters and operatives throughout the kingdom; and that a charter be applied for from Government.¹

The report of these proceedings appears in the last number of *The Crisis*, together with a valedictory address from Owen in which he announces that the "awful crisis" in human affairs is now happily terminated; that the old world shall pass away "through a great moral

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. IV., p. 153.

revolution of the human mind, directed solely by truth, by charity, and by kindness"; and that *The Crisis* dies only "to be replaced by the *New Moral World*, in which Truth, Industry and Knowledge will for ever reign triumphant."

CHAPTER XIX

REDEUNT SATURNIA REGNA

WITH the appearance on the first of November, 1834, of the weekly paper entitled *The New Moral World*, Owen's life entered upon a new phase of activity. The disastrous year 1834 broke up many of the Co-operative Societies, and reduced those that survived to quiescence. And Owen's interest in the whole commercial side of the movement, Co-operative trading and Labour Exchanges, and his own final scheme of a Universal Consolidated Association of Producers and Consumers, had never been very keen. Even if the final and most magnificent scheme had succeeded, it would have been but a half-way house, a stepping-stone on the road to the ideal, and Owen had no love for stepping-stones and half-way houses. In the columns of the *New Moral World*, therefore, we hear little more of Co-operative Societies and Labour Bazaars. Their existence and activities no longer interested the Socialists, for by that name Owen's disciples were from henceforth to be recognised. Owen indeed takes occasion to express his own opinion pretty plainly. On visiting Carlisle in November, 1836, he writes, "To my surprise I found there are 6 or 7 Co-operative Societies in different parts of the town, doing well, as

they think, that is, making some profit by joint stock retail trading. It is, however, high time to put an end to the notion very prevalent in the public mind, that this is the Social System which we contemplate, or that it will form any part of the arrangements in the New Moral World.”¹

Again, after the final transformation, reported in the last chapter, of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, Owen and Trade Unions seem to have entirely parted company. He had expressed a desire to attend a Delegates’ Meeting held in London in the autumn of 1834 in order to communicate important information, and the secretary is instructed to convey to him the following resolution:—“That this meeting respectfully declines holding any conference with or receiving any communication from Mr. Owen.”²

With the two great popular movements which marked this period, Chartism and the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, Owen, again, had little sympathy. His general attitude towards these and all similar democratic movements is admirably summed up in some notes, preserved amongst the Place MSS., of a speech made by Owen in a debate on Free Trade in 1837. Place’s summary of Owen’s argument runs as follows: “We can support all Europe. Lose our time in discussing these subjects. Question, is there knowledge enough among the working people to put an end to all our institutions? Until equality none done. Equality more easy than any other change.”³

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. III., p. 26.

² Manchester Correspondence, Letter signed J. D. Styles, dated October 1, 1834.

³ Wallas’s *Place*, p. 360, note.

Never was Owen's social philosophy compressed within so brief a compass. We find that both G. A. Fleming, the editor of the *New Moral World*, and Lloyd Jones, one of the leading Socialist missionaries, opposed the Anti-Corn Law League.¹ And the Anti-Corn Law advocates, for their part, showed little leaning to Socialist sympathies. We find Ebenezer Elliott, in 1836, warning the people against being "deluded by the Owens, the Oastlers, the Bulls and the Sadlers."²

The relations of the Socialists with the Chartists were of a more intimate character. In leading articles in the newspapers and in the mouths of the respectable classes generally, Socialist and Chartist were indeed frequently used as convertible terms. The Bishop of Exeter, in his famous speeches in the House of Lords in 1840, sought to draw fresh odium upon Robert Owen and his followers by describing their close alliance with the Chartists.

"It was a common thing," he said, "for Chartists and Socialists to meet in the same rooms, and the leaders of one body frequently assisted the leaders of the other on public occasions." Prominent Chartists were frequently prominent also in their advocacy of Socialism; the *Northern Star* and the *New Moral World* were printed at the same place by Hobson, of Leeds. The two bodies, in fact, were united in a common antagonism to religion, morality, and social order.³

But in fact, though a large number of persons, whose

¹ Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 231; *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 748, etc.

² From the *Birmingham Journal*, reported in the *New Moral World*, Vol. II., p. 250.

³ Speech of February 4, 1840.



*From a crayon drawing by S. B. in the National Portrait Gallery.
Photo by Emery Walker*

ROBERT OWEN.

political creed could not be defined more precisely than as discontent with the established order, belonged at one time to one and at another time to the other body, or to both simultaneously,¹ and though many prominent Chartists were or had been Socialists, it is doubtful whether any leading Socialists could have been styled Chartists. It is certain that Owen himself could at no time have fairly been so described. We have seen in the previous chapter that Bronterre O'Brien in 1832 reproached the Owenites with holding aloof from the agitation for securing political rights for the people—the Chartist movement in embryo: and that Owen had even earned the suspicion of being in league with the Government and the propertied classes for the defence of class privileges.²

The difference between the standpoint of the two movements, as it appeared to a sober-minded Socialist, is well put by Mr. Hawkes Smith in a letter to the *Morning Chronicle* in July, 1839, protesting against the confusion by that journal of the two bodies.

“The fact is that like other sensible and reflective men the Socialists as a body are Chartists ‘in the abstract,’ but they see and feel the difficulty and danger of great and sudden Government changes, and they, as a body, hold themselves aloof from political agitation. They will first secure for all the means of a good, sound, practical education, and of permanent, profitable, beneficial, leisure-affording employment; and, these things

¹ In the northern manufacturing towns, especially, Socialists and Chartists were often associated together. A large part of the funds for building the Halls of Science used by the Socialists for their meetings was subscribed by Chartists and reformers generally.

² Above, p. 432.

attained, they presume their argument for political reforms will be better worth advancing, and their voices more worthy attention. And further, they abhor all exhibitions of brute force ; and of all peaceable means they conceive—show them to be in error, if you can—that theirs, which infringes on no rights, attacks no existing accumulations of property, endangers the safety of no portion of public or private morals, will be found, as it is the safest, so also the speediest.”¹

Mr. Hawkes Smith, it will be seen, contemplates the possibility of political action, after Socialism had given education and material wellbeing to the people. But the leading Socialists aimed at nothing less than abolishing the need for political action together. Lloyd Jones, in the course of a debate on Chartism, contended that Socialism had a clearly defined plan, the application of which “would be productive of immediate relief and permanent benefit to Society. The Chartists on the contrary gave no defined outline of the course they would pursue, the Charter itself was confessedly but a means to an end. But to what end? Almost every individual Chartist had different views on this subject; and it was clear that, independent of the time which must be employed in order to gain the means of exercising political power, after it was attained a still greater lapse of time must take place before the newly enfranchised could settle among themselves to what use they would put it.”²

A few months later, in April, 1842, Robert Owen issued an Address to the Chartists of the British Isles,

¹ Quoted in *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 670.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 183.

in which the same views are expressed in language still more uncompromising.

"Men and Brethren," he writes, "when you and all the industrious classes are rapidly sinking into poverty . . . why waste your time in useless theories, instead of going straight forward to the immediate relief of your wants physical, mental, moral and practical?"

"Like the gentlemen who compose the Anti-Corn Law League, you expect from your measure—the People's Charter—what it cannot give.

"It was my intention to wait patiently for the supporters of the League and the Charter to be convinced by their own experience of the futility of the paltry and most inefficient measures for which they expend so much valuable time and capital to agitate.

"You, the Chartists, have been gradually stimulated to expect the most unreasonable and impracticable results from the Charter; and if it were to be obtained tomorrow, and its workings known, there are no parties who would be more disappointed with the effects which would be produced than the Chartists themselves.

"It is not any mere political change in your condition that can now be of any service to you or to Society."

The letter concludes with the intimation that the Chartist leaders are too ignorant and inexperienced to be able to find a remedy for the national ills, and that the true remedy must be sought in the spot from which the writer dates his manifesto—the Socialist Community at Tytherly.¹

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 348.

Thus Owen was not identified with either of the great democratic movements of the day. Nor did he in other directions come as conspicuously before the general public during the period from 1834 onwards as in previous years. He figured indeed at a public meeting of Members of Parliament and others which met at the Exchange Coffee-house on August 11, 1835, with Lord Dudley Stewart in the chair, to consider the perennial problem of the Unemployed. Owen himself, Attwood, and James Braby¹ were appointed a sub-committee to draw up a plan for providing employment.

The report of the sub-committee when presented proved, as might have been anticipated, to be a restatement of Owen's earlier schemes for placing all the "unoccupied producers and non-producers of wealth upon the land, there to be set to work with the due proportion of agriculture, manufactures and commerce." Of the committee and the report we hear no more.²

In March of this same year Owen presented another petition on behalf of the six Dorsetshire labourers. The petition, apparently drawn up by Owen himself, sets out that the convicts were "plain, ignorant, inoffensive labourers, earning at the time they were taken 7s. a week, and most of them had families to support," and that they had no idea that they were acting illegally. Goulburn, then Home Secretary, replies briefly that all these

¹ James Braby was one of Owen's latest converts. He had recently published in the *Agricultural and Industrial Magazine* some calculations, reprinted in the *New Moral World* for May 2, 1835, showing that the labour of five hundred persons (men, women and children in the usual proportion) on one thousand acres of land might, if properly directed, be expected not only to maintain themselves, but to produce a clear annual profit of about £3,000.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 348.

circumstances had been taken into account, and that he cannot advise Her Majesty to grant a pardon. On behalf of some later convicts—John Frost, William Jones and Zephaniah Williams—sentenced to death for high treason, Owen's appeal for mercy was more successful. On February 1, 1840, Lord Normanby writes that the Queen had been graciously pleased, in reply to Owen's memorial, to transmute the sentence to transportation for life.¹

There were other political addresses and letters to dignities and powers of various kinds during these years. The most important episode, however, was a journey to the Continent made in 1837, mainly with the object of laying his proposals for the reformation of society before Prince Metternich, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from Esterhazy, the Austrian Ambassador in London. On his way to Vienna Owen visited Paris, received the honorary membership of one or two public societies, attended a meeting of the Academy, and gave a lecture in the Hôtel de Ville, his remarks being translated to the audience by Victor Considérant, one of the most enthusiastic of Fourier's disciples, who was still living in Paris fifty years later.²

From Paris he proceeded to Munich, learnt that the King (Ludwig I.) was at his summer quarters at Berchtesgaden, and followed him there. In response to Owen's note requesting an interview the King despatched

¹ These letters are preserved in the Manchester Correspondence.

² See *Twenty Years in Paris*, by R. H. Sherard (1905), p. 379. Owen also spoke at the Athénée, where his remarks were translated by Jules Gay, Evrat and Radiguel. It was after hearing him on this occasion that Reybaud included Owen in his book, published a year or two later, *Études sur les Réformateurs*.

his Prime Minister early the following day to conduct the visitor to his presence. After an oral explanation of the New View had been furnished him, the King asked for a fuller statement in writing, and Owen left the royal presence to prepare it. On his arrival in Vienna he at once sought an interview with Metternich. "It must be remembered," he writes, "that at this period Prince Metternich was considered the most experienced and influential statesman in Europe. It was on this account I now visited him, preferring at all times to apply at once to the highest supposed intellect in authority. And it has always been my impression—and after much experience with all classes the impression is confirmed—that it will be much easier to reform the world through Governments, properly supported by the people, than by any other means. Let the Governments of Europe and America be made to see that it will be for their permanent interest and happiness that the population of the world should be taught and governed on true principles and consistent practice, and be assured they will lend their willing assistance and powerful aid to accomplish this ever to be desired result."¹

Owen had the promised opportunity of laying his views before Metternich, who, like the King of Bavaria, diplomatically closed the interview by asking Owen to furnish a detailed statement in writing. From Vienna Owen proceeded to Dresden, where he interviewed the First Minister of the Crown, and thence to Berlin, where he was received by our Ambassador, Lord William Russell, and had much conversation with Alexander von Humboldt, whose acquaintance he had made in

¹ *Millennial Gazette*, May 15, 1856, p. 15.

Paris in 1818, in the company of Cuvier and Laplace. From Berlin he returned, towards the end of the year, to England.

With these few exceptions, however, Owen's activities throughout this period were confined to the propaganda of Socialism amongst the humbler classes in this country. So that his earliest biographer is able to write : " From this date (1834) Owen's proceedings have little to interest people generally . . . his writings were of an unpopular character ; and he had exhausted his power of exciting the enthusiasm of rich and powerful men ; the leading newspapers took no note of his proceedings, and his publications were not to be seen on the counters of respectable newsvendors." ¹

That is how it strikes a contemporary. But in fact, these years were by no means the least fruitful or least important of Owen's life. They comprise the period of his greatest literary activity. He poured himself out in continual lectures, addresses, tracts and books, throughout the whole of these years ; they represent also a time of ever-growing influence over a circle which was continually widening. That Owen had now definitely broken with Trade Unionists, with commercial Co-operators, with all schemes of political reform of any kind, enabled him to concentrate his whole energies on

¹ *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, by W. L. Sargent, pp. 326, 327. Mr. Sargent's book appeared in 1860, within two years of Owen's death. No doubt Sargent was too near to the events he describes fairly to judge of their importance, or of the character of Owen's influence. Owen, in his later years at any rate, appeared to this biographer as just " an amiable and garrulous old gentleman." But it would not be fair to judge Sargent by this extract. His book, though never wholly sympathetic, is on the whole fair-minded ; gives the main facts correctly ; and represents pretty accurately the judgment of the average British Philistine.

the spread of his own peculiar teachings and to organise a compact and enthusiastic company of disciples. From this time onwards Owen had put aside the things of the old world and devoted himself to proclaiming the happiness that was coming upon the earth. The glittering vision of a whole planet partitioned out into quadrangular paradises, each with its sufficiency of well-cultivated acres, was always before his eyes; and the millennium seemed never farther off than harvest is from seedtime. Place writes on January 7, 1836, "Mr. Owen has this day assured me, in the presence of more than thirty other persons, that within six months the whole state and condition of Society in Great Britain will be changed, and all his views will be carried fully into effect."¹

This keynote is struck in the opening sentences of the first number of the *New Moral World* :—

"The rubicon between the old Immoral and the New Moral World is finally passed; and Truth, Knowledge, Union, Industry and Moral Good now take the field, and openly advance against the united powers of Falsehood, Ignorance, Dis-Union and Moral Evil. The sword of Truth and Moral Good is now unsheathed, and will not be returned to its scabbard until Falsehood and Moral Evil shall be driven from the abodes of men. . . . The First Coming of Christ was a partial development of Truth to the few, conveyed, of necessity, in dark sayings, parables and mysteries. The Second Coming of Christ will make Truth known to the many, and enable all to enjoy the endless benefits in practice, which it will assure to mankind. The time is therefore arrived when

¹ Quoted by G. Wallas, *Life of Place*, p. 64.

the foretold Millennium is about to commence, when the slave and the prisoner, the bondsman and the bondswoman, the child and the servant, shall be set free for ever, and oppression of body and mind shall be known no more."

On May 1, 1835, there was held in the Institution at Charlotte Street a public meeting to establish the "Association of All Classes of All Nations formed to effect an entire change in the character and condition of the human race."¹ Robert Owen opened the proceedings in a speech in which he set forth the objects of the Association, the methods by which they were to be obtained, and the proposed constitution of the Society. He further announced that he had consented for a short time to act as the "Preliminary Father" of the Association; but that on May 14 of the following year, 1836, on which date, should he live so long, he would have completed his sixty-fifth year, he proposed to retire from public life, and to devote the remainder of his activity to the fulfilment of two pressing tasks—the preparation of a methodical exposition of the principles and practices of the New State of Society, and an account of his own life. Whatever time might remain he proposed to spend in visiting and confirming in the faith the numerous friends of the New System in the manufacturing districts of England and elsewhere.

The *Book of the New Moral World*, the first part of which was published in 1836,² represented the fulfilment of the first of these self-imposed tasks. Brief and fragmentary autobiographies continued in the future as in

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 217.

² There are seven parts in all, the last being published in 1844.

the past to run through all the serial publications conducted by Owen ; but his formal Autobiography was not taken in hand until some twenty years later, and remained unfinished at his death.¹ The third task was abundantly fulfilled. For the next few years he spent some months each year in travelling and lecturing in the provinces, besides lecturing regularly on Sundays and frequently on other days when in London. The fourth volume of the *New Moral World* (Oct., 1837—Oct., 1838) records, in addition to the visits to Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, lectures delivered by Owen at Liverpool, Preston, Bradford, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, Wisbech, Lynn, Oldham, March, Halifax, Peterborough, Hyde, Boston, Norwich, Leicester, Sunderland. On at least one occasion he lectured six nights in the week and gave, in addition, two lectures on the Sunday. This week's work included Edinburgh, Glasgow, Sunderland, and Newcastle, and he left the last-named place at 3 a.m. to lecture in Leeds in the evening.² It is to be remembered that many of these journeys were probably made by coach, and that Owen at this date, May, 1838, was just sixty-seven years of age.

In the following year he lectured at Birmingham, Reading, Cheltenham, Wisbech, and elsewhere. In the autumn of 1839, at the end of a lecturing tour in Scotland, he gives the concluding lecture of a course at Glasgow on September 11 ; on the 12th and 13th he lectures (for the second time) at Edinburgh ; on the 14th he proceeds to Newcastle, and lectures in that town on Sunday the 15th. On Monday he goes to Leeds. Thence

¹ The first volume, which carried the life down to 1823, was published in 1857. Vol. I.A., containing reports of addresses and other documents, appeared in the following year, the year of Owen's death.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. IV., p. 233.

Campsall, Hull, Worksop, Doncaster, and finally to Birmingham.¹ In December we find him lecturing at Leeds and Huddersfield.² Add his constant visits to the Continent, Ireland and America, and the Socialists may perhaps be forgiven for comparing his journeyings by sea and land to those of the Apostle Paul.³

To the casual spectator Owen's retirement must have seemed to bring him before the public more persistently than before. In fact that retirement was a spiritual event which left as little trace on the phenomenal world as the passage of the Rubicon which he had proclaimed so triumphantly in 1834, or as the Last Judgment announced by another prophet, which took place some time in 1757 and the world knew it not.

To return to the Association of All Classes of All Nations, its great object is defined as being "to carry into practical operation the system of Society propounded by Robert Owen."⁴ The progress made during the first year or two, in London at all events, seems to have been rather slow: only 207 London members are recorded at the Annual Meeting of May, 1836.⁵ But classes for reading and instruction had been formed and the Community Fund started. The next year, 1837, however, saw a great advance. The annual Congress was held in Manchester, and delegates were present from London, Liverpool, Bolton, Warrington, Bradford, Newtown (Mont.) and ten other towns, mostly in the northern manufacturing districts.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 762.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. VI., pp. 943, 944.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 233.

⁴ *First Quarterly Report; New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 404.

⁵ *New Moral World*, Vol. II. p. 230.

It was resolved by this Congress to enrol the Society under the Statute 10 Geo. IV. c. 56, in order to obtain a legal security for their funds. It was resolved further, on the motion of Lloyd Jones, to establish a Social Missionary and Tract Society. It was also decided after some debate that a patriarchal government was needed for the Society, at any rate in its earlier years; and Owen was requested to continue to preside over the enterprise, his title being hereafter enlarged to "Rational Social Father." Finally a Central Board was constituted, with a Home Department at Manchester and a Foreign Department in London. A few days later the office of the Society and the publication of the *New Moral World* were transferred to Manchester. G. A. Fleming was appointed Secretary to the Board and editor of the paper. At the same time a revised statement of the aims of the Association was drawn up :—

Object : The object of this Association is to effect peaceably and by reason alone an entire change in the character and condition of mankind, by establishing over the world the principle and practice of the religion of charity for the convictions, feelings and conduct of all individuals, without distinction of sex, class, sect, party, country or colour, combined with a well devised, equitable and natural system of united property; which united property is to be created by the members of the Association, without infringing upon the rights of any private property now in existence. And this great change is to be introduced and

accomplished by devising and adopting new arrangements, of a much higher order than any now in existence, for forming a superior character for the human race; for producing and distributing in the best manner the best qualities of all kinds of wealth abundantly for all; and for governing mankind, without artificial rewards or punishments, most beneficially for each individual.

Means: These objects are to be attained, *first*, by the establishment of a central Association with branches extending to every part of the world. *Secondly*, by the central Association and branches creating a new public opinion in favour of this entire change in the character and condition of man by public meetings, lectures, discussions, missionaries, cheap publications, mutual exchange of productions upon equitable principles without individual competition; and finally, by founding as soon as possible Communities of United Interest.¹

A "National Community Friendly Society" was also formed under the same general management for the purpose of collecting funds "for the mutual assistance, maintenance and education of the members, their wives and husbands, children and nominees." The funds were to be applied in the first instance "for the purchase or rental of land whereon to erect suitable dwellings or other buildings—wherein the members shall by united labour support each other under every vicissitude, including the establishment of schools for children."

At the next meeting of the Congress, held in

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. III., June 10, 1837.

Manchester in May, 1838, six Missionaries were appointed, Messrs. Lloyd Jones, Rigby, Green, Buchanan, Campbell and Hollick, and were allocated respectively to London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. The Central Board was moved this year to Birmingham, and the paper was published in that town. At an adjourned meeting of Congress held in Birmingham in October of this year, 1838, a deputation which had been appointed to inspect sites suitable for a Community reported that they had visited a fen farm in Norfolk consisting of about seven hundred acres, in the parishes of Wretton, Wareham and Stoke Ferry, and found it so suitable that they had entered into an agreement for its purchase, and had paid a deposit of one thousand pounds.¹

By this time, it will be seen, the Association had amassed a substantial sum of money. Its numbers and influence had also greatly increased; the 53rd Branch was formed in April, 1839.² In the Congress which met in the following month, further changes were made. The two Societies—the Association of All Classes and the National Community Society—were amalgamated under the title “The Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists,” and the new Society was to be enrolled under the Act already referred to, as a religious or friendly Society. The Central Board was to pay the salaries of the missionaries,³ of whom ten were appointed,

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 12. The purchase does not seem to have been taken up, for the estate ultimately purchased was in Hampshire.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 408.

³ The salaries, as we learn later, varied from £80 to £100 a year (*New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1007). See also “Constitution” of 1838, p. 15.

with several assistants.¹ The *New Moral World* was again to be moved, this time to Leeds, under the same editorship. It was further announced that negotiations were in progress for taking two estates for Community purposes.² In the event it appears that one estate only was actually taken—that at Tytherly in Hampshire. The history of the Community which was started there will form the subject of a later chapter.

In July, 1840, in an editorial introducing a new series of the *New Moral World* in a greatly enlarged and improved form, it is recorded that the Association now reckons sixty-two branches ; it is estimated that not less than fifty thousand persons attend the various lectures and services held each Sunday in all the principal towns of the kingdom ; and that the number of adherents and of well-wishers who are prevented by social considerations from openly avowing their views, or attending the lectures, is larger still.³ At this date—as the Bishop of Exeter told a House of Lords which refused to shudder—the kingdom had been divided, for the purposes of the propaganda, into fourteen districts, and the appointed Social Missionaries included no fewer than 350 towns in their visitations. The laborious Bishops could hardly do more.

From the *New Moral World* of July, 1840, again, we learn that the first Social Institution had been opened at Sheffield, and that Halls of Science or Social Institutions,

¹ The name of G. J. Holyoake does not appear in the list given in the *New Moral World* (Vol. V., p. 520). But it is mentioned there were other vacancies, notably in Birmingham, still to be filled, and I think Holyoake was appointed later in this year.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 520.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII., p. 2.

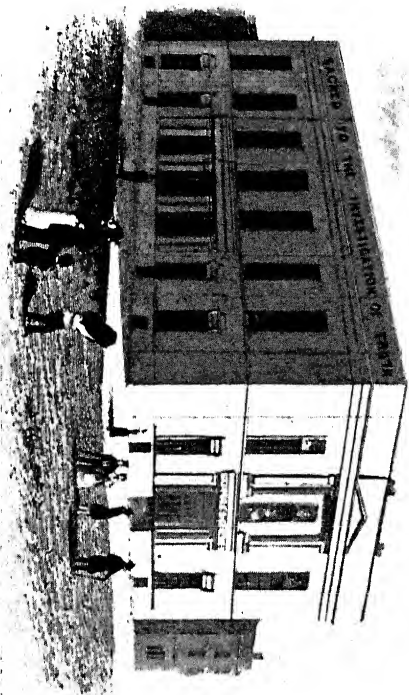
for the use of members of the Association, were in process of erection at London, Manchester, Huddersfield, Liverpool, Birmingham, Coventry, Bradford, Halifax, Leeds, Glasgow and many other towns. During the previous year nearly £22,000 had been expended in the erection of "these Temples of Science and Truth." At Manchester the Institution had cost £6,000, at Liverpool £5,000, in London £3,000.¹ The efforts of the Socialists to erect these Halls of Science had been greatly stimulated by the refusal of the local authorities and others to lend Town Halls and other public rooms for the purpose of Socialist meetings.²

The services held every Sunday, and often twice a Sunday, in these Halls of Science or Social Institutions were for the most part modelled, like the services of the Ethical Societies at the present day, on the services of the Church of England. Hymns were sung; there were readings, mostly of an ethical or philosophical tendency; and finally an address or sermon would be delivered. That there was often matter, both in the readings and in the discourses, calculated to shock and offend, cannot be denied.³ The naming of the children which frequently took place at these services—Owen or some other prominent Socialist officiating as minister—must in itself have seemed objectionable if not actually blasphemous to most Christians.

¹ As already said, some of the funds for building these Halls had been contributed by Chartists and others who could not be labelled as followers of Owen.

² See below, Chapter xxi.

³ See the description of a service at Tytherly, quoted in the Bishop of Exeter's second speech against Socialism. Many of these sermons, etc., as reported in the *New Moral World*, were very objectionable in tone and substance.



*From a copy of the "Lives of the Hall of Science Association,"
1839, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.*

In this and other ways offence was inevitable. But these services were founded, not in antagonism to existing beliefs and institutions, but as a means of satisfying the social and religious instincts of those who took part in them. It is impossible to read the series of *Social Tracts* circulated at this time by the Community Society, the *Book of the New Moral World*, or other Owen's publications, without recognising the sincerity and the feeling exhibited. That feeling does not perhaps merit the epithet religious: for "religion" to most persons connotes a certain attitude of mind towards the cosmos, certain perceptions or apprehensions of things unseen, which were conspicuously lacking in all the socialist utterances. But if Robert Owen and his followers never lifted their eyes above the earth, they were at any rate not wanting in goodwill to men. Goodwill, unvarying and unstinted, is the keynote of all Owen's own teaching. And if the Sunday services caused offence to some, they at any rate helped to inculcate a certain lesson.

"Let me make the songs of the people, and I care not who makes their laws," was well said. And if we wish to realise what Socialism meant to those who revered Owen as a prophet, who should lead them to the land of promise, we can do no better than study the *Social Hymns* selected or prepared for use at meetings and festivals of the brotherhood. The authorised version contains 155 hymns and a few festival songs.¹ Some of these hymns and songs had

¹ Published in London in 1840. Second Edition. The earlier edition itself an enlarged version of a previous collection—had appeared at Leeds in 1838.

been culled from contemporary literature—there is, for instance, a Hymn to Death, by Richard Cumberland, the dramatist, and a warning against rash judgment of others taken from a Unitarian hymn book, etc., etc. Others bear obvious evidence that they were of home manufacture. Such are all or nearly all the numerous hymns addressed to “Community,” the “Social Scheme,” and so on. Thus No. 148 invokes Community in the following terms:—

Hail Gem of Progression, of Wisdom First Birth,
Of Charity, Joy and Good-will upon earth! .
Long, long have my fairy dreams dwelt upon thee,
Thou much to be wished for; thou noble shalt be!

Nos. 129 and 65, amongst others, are devoted to the same theme:—

No. 129.

Community, the joyful sound
That cheers the social band,
And spreads a holy zeal around
To dwell upon the land.

Community is labour blessed,
Redemption from the Fall,
The good of all by each possessed,
The good of each by all.

Community is friendship's throne
With kindred minds around:
'Tis in Community alone
That friendship can abound.

Community doth wealth increase,
Extends the years of life,
Begins on earth the reign of peace
And ends the reign of strife.

Community doth all possess
That can to man be given :
Community is happiness,

No. 65.

Outcasts on your native soil,
Doom'd to poverty and toil,
Strangers in your native land,
Come, and join the social band.

Leave, oh leave, your wretched state,
Scene of discord, scene of hate,
Take the brother's hand we give,
Come and in communion live.

Leave your selfish cares behind,
Turn your loves from self to kind.
Let the claims of *mine* and *thine*
In all-blessing *ours* combine.

On each other cast our care,
All each others' comforts share;
Hand in hand and heart in heart,
Bliss enjoy and bliss impart.

There are numerous hymns addressed to Benevolence, Liberty, Industry, Temperance, Truth, Virtue and Wisdom. It will be seen that there is an eighteenth-century flavour about the virtues selected for eulogy; and indeed the hymns throughout breathe the very spirit of that century.

Here is an invocation to Temperance, which we may surmise was made on the premises for domestic consumption.

Thou calm companion of the wise,
Serene promoter of our joys
By pleasure without pain;
Thou great preservative of health,
Thou gem beyond all pomp and wealth,
Which all who seek may gain.

Again, the voice of the Owenite is heard in the following address to Innocence.

No. 128.

Dear Infant, are thy tender powers
 Then sinful, vile and base;
 Or dwells there evil in that smile
 Which decks thy lovely face.

No, smiling innocent, 'tis false,
 No natural vice hast thou;
 Thy mind expanding free shall be,
 Broad, placid as thy brow.

For circumstances pure and bright
 Thy progress shall surround;
 A mother's care, a father's love
 In fulness shall abound.

The following hymn to Benevolence is of higher literary merit, and was no doubt taken from an outside source.

No. 46.

No altar smokes, no off'rings bleed,
 No guiltless lives expire;
 To help a brother in his need
 Is all our rites¹ require.

Our offering is a willing mind
 To comfort the distressed,
 In others' good our own to find,
 In others' blessing blest.

Go where the friendless stranger lies,
 To perish is his doom;
 Snatch from the grave his closing eyes,
 And bring his blessing home.

So again, the following hymn to Freedom, which might more aptly have been christened "The New Patriotism," indicates an outside source:

¹ This word is printed *rights* in the *Social Hymns*.

No. 119.

Is there a thought can fill the human mind
More pure, more vast, more generous, more refined,
Than that which guides th' enlightened patriot's toil?
Not he whose view is bounded by the soil,
Not he whose narrow heart can only shrine
The land, the people that he calleth Mine;
Not he, who, to set up that land on high,
Will make whole nations bleed, whole nations die;
Not he, who calling that land's might his pride,
Trampleth the rights of all the earth beside.
No! He it is, the just, the gen'rous soul,
Who owneth brotherhood with either pole,
Stretches from realm to realm his spacious mind,
And guards the weal of all the human kind;
Holds Freedom's banner o'er the earth unfurled,
And stands the Guardian Patriot of the World.

Here we have, drawn by themselves, a picture of Socialist ideals and aspirations. Their Paradise was a life of well-fed, unambitious ease spent in cultivating the kindly fruits of the earth; their noblest type of humanity was he who should diligently practise temperance, "the great preservative of health," and a benevolence which, overflowing the narrow boundaries of family and country, aspired to fill the circumference of the planet. The list of virtues celebrated is not less remarkable if we consider what it fails to include. No place is found for Chastity or Fortitude; no place is found for Justice—an omission which will help to explain the indifference of the Socialists to all the great democratic movements of the time.

Beyond the world of humanity, the Socialist Creed is one of pure negation. There is a hymn to Death—quoted from Cumberland—of which the first stanza runs:

What art thou, Death, that I should fear
The Shadow of a Shade?
What's in the name that meets the ear,
Of which to be afraid?

For the rest, the following hymn to Nature depicts the Socialist attitude in the presence of the ultimate mysteries.

No. 42. Nature :

To all earth's blessings deaf and blind,
Lost to himself and to his kind,
With mad presumption, lo! man tries
To pierce the æther of the skies.

His fancy winged to worlds unknown
He scorns the treasures of his own,
By fears of Hell and hopes of Heaven
His noble mind to madness driven.

Oh! first of all the tribes of earth,
Wake to the knowledge of thy worth,
Then mark the ills of human life,
And heal its woes and guard its strife.

Victim and tyrant thou, O man,
Thy world, thyself, thy fellows scan,
Nor forward cast an anxious eye,
Who knows to live, shall know to die.

CHAPTER XX

THE NEW MORAL WORLD

O WEN did not long delay to fulfil the promise which he had made at the inaugural meeting of the Association of All Classes of All Nations in May, 1835. The first part of the *Book of the New Moral World*, which was designed to give a formal exposition of his system, appeared in the course of 1836 ; to be followed at intervals during the next few years by six other parts. The first part attained a very large circulation and went through several editions in the course of a few years. An abstract of it, under the title *Human Nature, or the Moral Science of Man*, appeared in the course of the year 1838 as No. 5 in the series of Social Tracts, published by the National Community Friendly Society. Samuel Cornish, the editor of these tracts, writes to his "Venerable and Illustrious Father" in October, 1838, submitting a copy of the Tract.

"Herewith I submit to you our two last Tracts Nos. 5 and 6. No. 5 you will perceive is an abstract or condensation of the 'Book of the New Moral World': from the first sight of that work I predicted to you that it must eventually supersede all other treatises on man. I am still of the same opinion. I regard it as

the most perfect of all your excellent writings. Now there has been, as you know, a shilling or eighteenpenny edition of this work, but the millions have not 1s. or 1s. 6d. to expend in Books, or, if they have, in their present unenlightened state they feel no disposition to expend it in that way. It occurred to me therefore that an abstract, condensation, or abridgement of it should be made, which at length after reading 'The Book' several times over I have to the best of my ability accomplished. As the truths it contains—like God Himself—are immutable and unchangeable they can require no alterations or corrections. I have therefore had it cast in stereotype or unchangeable and everlasting letters."

The following brief summary of the argument is extracted from the whole seven parts of the book, which do in fact, notwithstanding many repetitions, present a fairly coherent and intelligible account of Owen's system.

There are signs, Owen says, which indicate that the time for a great moral revolution is at hand. Chief among the signs is the growth of poverty side by side with the growth of wealth; the British Empire is the richest in the world; its riches have enormously increased in the past generation, yet "millions of the most industrious population of the world are suffering from actual poverty or the fear of it."

The peoples have come to distrust the governments; there are agitations and discontent, not only in the British Empire, but throughout the civilised world, and yet there is enough and to spare for all. The mechanical inventions, the chemical discoveries of recent years,

have put fabulous wealth within our reach.¹ In an address to William IV., which is prefixed to the first part of the book, Owen gives forcible expression to his convictions on this point. "In the time of your ancestors, Sire," he writes, "fifteen millions of men could produce enough to supply the wants of fifteen millions and no more. But now a population of twenty-five millions can with the same expenditure of energy supply the wants of six hundred millions. And yet the bulk of the people pass their lives in poverty. There is poverty and misery everywhere instead of wealth and happiness, because of the irrational basis of all existing institutions." In a striking passage Owen holds up to condemnation, one by one, the causes of the evils which prevail in the world. These causes are :—

1. The Religions, so-called, of the world.
2. The Governments of the world, under every form and name.
3. The professions civil and military of all countries.
4. The monetary system of all nations.
5. The practice of buying and selling for a moneyed profit.
6. The practices which produce contests, civil and military, individual and national.
7. The present practice of producing and distributing wealth.

¹ Owen's imagination appears to have been impressed at this time by the progress of the physical sciences. Vols. III. and IV. of the *New Moral World* (October, 1836, to October, 1838) bear the sub-title "Manual of Science." Many of the Socialist Halls in the provinces were called "Halls of Science."

8. The present practice of forming the character of man.
9. Force and fraud, as now prevalent in every department of life, in all countries.
10. Separate interests and consequent universal disunion.
11. Isolated families, and separate family interests.
12. The practice of educating women to be family slaves, instead of superior companions.
13. The artificial and indissoluble marriages of the priesthood.
14. The falsehood and deception, now prevalent over the world.
15. Unequal education, employment and condition.
16. The strong oppressing the weak.
17. The levying of unequal taxes, and expending them upon inefficient measures for good, when they might be applied, most efficiently, to produce wealth, knowledge and permanent prosperity for all the people.
18. The practice of producing inferior wealth of all kinds, when the most superior would be more economical, and far more to be desired.¹

But a new light is now about to break upon the world. Truth's Second Advent is at hand.

"The First Truth, given through the spirit of the most advanced mind in former periods of the history of Humanity, declared—That to make the population of the world wise, good and happy, there must be

¹ Part. IV., pp. 44, 45 I have slightly abridged Owen's statement of the eighteen causes.

universal charity and universal kindness—men must be trained to love one another as they love themselves, and then there will be peace on earth and goodwill to men.” But the happy issue was defeated by ignorance. That ignorance is now about to be removed. “The Second Coming of Truth is to announce this all-important knowledge to the human race.”¹

The reader has already, no doubt, become familiar with the nature of the revelation about to be made. But quote Owen’s later and fuller statement of his doctrine in his own words, in order that it may be seen that his views, though still crude enough, had developed since 1816 and 1817. Weight, if not yet perhaps sufficient weight, is assigned to the part played by heredity and ante-natal circumstances generally in the evolution of character.

The Five Fundamental Facts of Human Nature, on the understanding of which depends all right action for individuals and for Societies, are as follows :

- “ 1. That man is a compound being, whose character is formed of his constitution or organisation at birth, and of the effects of external circumstances upon it from birth to death : such original organisation and external influence continually acting and reacting upon each other.
- “ 2. That man is compelled by his original constitution to receive his *feelings* and his *convictions* independently of his *will*.
- “ 3. That his feelings and his convictions, or both of them united, create the motive to action called

¹ Part VII., p. 65.

the *Will*, which stimulates him to act and decides his actions.

- “4. That the organisation of no two human beings is ever precisely similar at birth ; nor can art subsequently form any two individuals, from infancy to maturity, to be precisely similar.
- “5. That nevertheless, the constitution of every infant, except in case of organic disease, is capable of being formed into a *very inferior* or a *very superior* being, according to the qualities of the external circumstances allowed to influence the constitution from birth.”

The means for impressing a superior character on the new generation are two : a rational education and a favourable environment—to borrow a convenient phrase from a later terminology than Owen’s.

The favourable environment is to be secured, as already declared, by founding Villages of Co-operation and Equality, each with a population varying from five hundred to two thousand souls. On the external arrangements of the villages Owen has little fresh to say. But he makes one novel suggestion, that the Government of the day should forthwith purchase the new Railways, and a strip of land from three to six miles broad on each side of them, and should lay out this property so as to form nuclei for the new Societies ; that the change from the old order to the new might be effected gradually without catastrophe.¹

Owen’s ideas of the internal organisation of the

¹ Part V., p. 57.

proposed colonies have also developed. He now proposes that the kind of labour in which each member of the Community should engage shall be determined solely by his age, the general principle being that the arts and crafts and all mechanical operations shall be undertaken by the young ; and that the older members of the community shall regulate distribution, administer justice, and provide for the external relations of the miniature Society.

There are to be eight ages in the lifetime of the man of the New Moral World :

I. "*First Class*"—from birth to the end of the fifth year. To be so placed, trained, and educated that they may be in a proper temperature for their age ; fed with the most wholesome food ; lightly and loosely clothed ; regularly and duly exercised in a pure atmosphere ; also that their dispositions may be formed to have their greatest pleasure in attending to and promoting the happiness of all who may be around them ; that they may acquire an accurate knowledge, so far as their young capacities will easily admit, of the objects which they see and can handle ; and that no false impression be made on any of their senses by those around them refusing a simple explanation to any of their questions ; that they may have no knowledge of individual punishment or reward, nor be discouraged from always freely expressing their thoughts and feelings ; that they may be taught, as early as their minds can receive it, that the thoughts and feelings of others are, like their own, instincts of human nature, which they are compelled to have ; and thus may acquire in infancy the rudiments of charity and affection for all ; that

they may have no fear, but feel an implicit confidence in every one around them ; and that the immoral, selfish and individual feelings of our animal existence may be so directed as to derive their chief gratification from contributing to the pleasure and happiness of others."

II. The *Second Class*, from five to ten years of age, will "discard the useless toys of the old world." There will apparently be little formal or book education ; the children will receive their education by actually handling objects and by conversation with older persons ; they will also learn some of the lighter and easier arts of life ; they will help in the domestic arrangements and assist to keep the gardens and pleasure grounds in order. "And whatever they do they will perform as a matter of amusement and for exercise. . . . At ten they will be well-trained rational beings, superior in mind, manners, disposition, feelings and conduct to any who have yet lived."

III. The *Third Class*, from ten to fifteen years, will at first, from ten to twelve, direct and instruct those of the class below, in the work of the house and garden ; from twelve to fifteen they will learn and practise the more advanced of the useful arts and handicrafts ; the progress of science will furnish them with mechanical devices which will make all their labour light, and enable them to produce all the results required "in the shortest time, with the most pleasure to themselves and advantage to Society. . . . These new operations will be to them a continual source of instruction and amusement, to which they will look forward with the delight experienced by the acquisition of new im-

portant attainments." They will also in these five years advance rapidly in the knowledge of all the sciences, for "a royal road" to knowledge will be open to them.

IV. The youthful communists of the *Fourth Class*—from fifteen to twenty years—"will become men and women of a new race, physically, intellectually and morally; beings far superior to any yet known to have lived upon earth." In this period they will be instructors of the classes below, and active producers on their own account. In this period also the two sexes will naturally come together, and youth and maiden under the sole guidance of affection will form happy and in most cases lasting unions.

V. These four classes, aided by new mechanical and chemical inventions, may, it seems probable, be able to produce all the wealth required by the Community. But in order that there may be no failure, the *Fifth Class*, from twenty to twenty-five years, will be set apart as producers and general directors and instructors in every branch of production and education.

VI. The *Sixth Class*, from twenty-five to thirty, will not therefore be required to engage in any productive work. They will direct the distribution of the wealth formed by the junior classes. This work will probably occupy about two hours a day. The remainder of their time will be devoted to study and social intercourse.

VII. The *Seventh Class*, from thirty to forty, will govern all the internal affairs of the Community, and will compose all disputes and administer justice. The senior

member of that class will be the final arbiter in internal disputes and difficulties.

VIII. The *Eighth Class*, from forty to sixty, will undertake the foreign department ; they will correspond with other Communities ; arrange for the exchange of surplus products, and generally regulate external trade ; they will look after the public roads and organise the arrangements for travelling. They will naturally spend a large part of their own time in travelling, partly for their own pleasure, partly on the business of the Community. In this way many of them no doubt will travel round the world, finding a ready welcome in Communities like their own spread over the whole surface of the globe : "For the earth will not be the wild, barren waste, swamp or forest which with some exceptions it ever has been and yet is ; the united efforts of a well-trained world will speedily change it into a well-drained, highly cultivated and beautiful pleasure scene, which by its endless variety will afford health and enjoyment to all, such as the human mind in its present degraded and confined state has not the capacity to imagine." ¹

On one point Owen's opinion has undergone no change. He is still satisfied that Malthus and his followers are fighting with shadows born of the night of their own ignorance :

"Commonsense arrangements will be required, by judicious well-devised arrangements for 'swarming,' if the term is allowable, to prevent (the Communities) from ever being over-filled, to the detriment of any one of the family, or to any portion of the population of the

¹ Part V., pp. 65-78.

world ; to drain, cultivate and beautify the earth, as it will be for the health and happiness of all that it should be drained, cultivated and beautified, the members of these swarms will be deficient for many thousand years, not for ever.”¹

In this golden age all will have “as much employment in producing as in using or consuming wealth.”²

All will find their happiness in promoting the happiness of others :

“The primary and necessary object of all existence is to be happy. . . . But happiness cannot be obtained individually, it is useless to expect isolated happiness ; all must partake of it, or the few can never enjoy it ; man can therefore have but one real and genuine interest, which is, to make all of his race as peaceful in character and happy in feelings as the original organisation or nature of each will admit. When all shall be cordially engaged in promoting the happiness of all around them, then will they have entered upon the real business of life—then will they be occupied in promoting, to the greatest limit, their own individual happiness, which has been made permanently to consist in the happiness of the race ; and the only contest among men then will be, who shall the most succeed in extending happiness to his fellows. Herein will consist true religion, and the pure and genuine adoration of all that is great, good, beautiful and magnificent throughout the Universe.”³

And this new spirit of love will govern all man’s

¹ Part VI., p. 55.

² Part I., p. 14.

³ Part IV., p. 54.

relations with the lower animals. No one, in that golden age, will wantonly injure or destroy anything that has life ; and the whole animal creation will gradually lose its fear and distrust of man. "Thus will a terrestrial paradise be formed, in which harmony will pervade all that will exist upon the earth, and there will be none to hurt or destroy throughout the whole extent of its boundaries."¹

Even the last enemy of all shall be destroyed, and Death shall lose his terrors :

"Instead of teaching man to be afraid of death (for it is altogether a matter of early training) all might be instructed to view it, as it is, as a universal law of Nature, unavoidable, and in all probability not only thus necessary, but, it may be, highly beneficial in its ultimate consequences to all that have life. Man should therefore . . . be educated to have no fears of that which is unavoidable, but rather to rejoice that, after experiencing one life of rational happiness, he shall, by his decomposition, receive an endless renewal of apparent improved existences."²

In the same year, 1835, in which Owen wrote the first part of the *Book of the New Moral World*, he delivered a series of ten *Lectures on the Marriages of the Priesthood of the Old Immoral World*. Probably none of Owen's writings have been more misunderstood, or have excited more violent antagonism than this. No doubt it was of these Lectures that Sargant was thinking when he declared that Owen's works during this period were no longer to be found on the counters of respect-

¹ Part IV., p. 20.

² Part III., p. 64. Cf. Part I., p. 33.

able booksellers.¹ Their publication gave rise to a storm of angry outcries from the Church and its partisans in the press, and Owen's language was certainly well calculated to provoke the *odium theologicum*. The lectures are in fact a high-pitched and indiscriminate condemnation of the whole institution of Marriage—for the phrase "Marriages of the priesthood" is to be interpreted "Marriages instituted and solemnised by the priesthood." The nature of Owen's indictment may be gathered from the following quotations :

"The fall of man from innocence and from the plain and direct road to intelligence and happiness occurred when the priesthoods of the world induced some of our ignorant ancestors to feel ashamed of any part of their nature. . . .² And now I tell you, and, through you, the population of all the nations of the earth, that the present marriages of the world, under the system of moral evil in which they have been devised and are now contracted, are the sole cause of all the prostitution, and of more than one half of all the vilest and most degrading crimes known to society. And that, until you put away from among you and your children for ever *this accursed thing*, you will never be in a condition to become chaste or virtuous in your thoughts and feelings, or to know what real happiness is. . . . This unnatural crime destroys the finest feelings and best

¹ The odium excited by Owen's teaching on this point has not even yet died down. A second-hand bookseller, doing a fairly large trade, assured me that not only would he not sell any of Owen's books, but that he made a point of destroying all Owenite literature which came in his way in the ordinary course of business, and that notwithstanding the fact that Owen's publications now command a high price.

² Edition of 1840, p. 44.

powers of the species, by changing sincerity, kindness, affection, sympathy and pure love, into deception, envy, jealousy, hatred and revenge. It is a Satanic device of the Priesthood to place and keep mankind within their slavish superstitions, and to render them subservient to all their purposes" (p. 7).

"No persons, perhaps, are aware of the totally different character which this single institution has given to the human race, from that which it would have acquired provided the association of the sexes had been in accordance with the natural laws of our organisation; for in that case, the other great arrangements of human life would have been made consistent with it.

"The institution of marriage has forced the populations of all countries to adopt a system of exclusion and mystery in all their domestic arrangements, and has made it unavoidable that they should acquire the most injurious habits of falsehood, secrecy, and deception in their general conduct to each other, and to the world at large. This institution has also rendered it a matter of necessity that the most extravagant and injurious external circumstances should be formed for the accommodation of each married pair and their offspring; and it has inflicted, morally, and physically, the direst calamities upon the human race" (p. 73).

The present system of marriage is condemned, first because it perverts and degrades a natural and lawful instinct and causes shame where no shame should be.

Secondly because it creates unhappiness for the two contracting parties: "As men and women have not been

formed with power to create their own feelings, or to love or hate at their own pleasure, but are, on the contrary, compelled to receive such feelings as the influence of external objects produce in their organization, it is blasphemy, if anything is blasphemy, against the laws of their nature, for man or woman to make any promises or engagements relative to their future feelings of affection or hatred, or of liking or disliking, for each other" (p. 16).

Thirdly, the present system of marriage takes away all opportunity for improving the race. We have learnt, Owen points out, to improve the breed of the lower animals; but in the much more important matter of breeding human beings, we are content to leave all to chance—or not even to chance, for "The effects of wealth, luxury, and marriages of ambition, upon the upper, and of the manufacturing system upon the lower orders, are now rapidly reducing the superior powers and qualities of the human organization in this country to a very low and inferior standard; and should these pernicious measures be permitted to continue, this inferior standard must, in every generation, yet become more and more defective physically, intellectually, and morally" (p. 33).

Fourthly, the training in family life is the worst training a child can have. "But the single-family arrangements are hostile to cultivation in children of any of the superior and ennobling qualities of human nature. They are trained by them to acquire all the most mean and ignorant, selfish feelings that can be generated in the human character. The children within those dens of selfishness and hypocrisy are taught to consider their own

individual family their whole world, and that it is the duty and interest of all within that little orb to do whatever they can to promote the advantages of all the legitimate members of it. With these persons, it is *my* house, *my* wife, *my* estate, *my* children, or *my* husband; *our* estate, and *our* children; or *my* brothers, *my* sisters; and *our* house and property. This family party is trained to consider it quite right, and a superior mode of acting, for each member of it to seek, by all fair means—as almost any means, except *direct* robbery, are termed—to increase the wealth, honour, and privileges of the family, and every individual member of it” (p. 36).

In any case, apart from the evil lessons of the ordinary family life, the parents are not the best persons to train their children; their “excess of animal affection” stands in the way. Moreover the training of children cannot safely be trusted to mere haphazard self-elected persons. It is a matter of such high importance for society as to demand the services of specially qualified experts. For “a child is the most valuable product nature can give to man—a being of incalculable worth, capable of returning to Society many hundredfold the capital expended and labour bestowed in nursing and rearing it.”

Owen’s denunciation of marriage is, as will be seen, in the last analysis inspired by his perception that the social structure of the Old Immoral World is based upon the family; and that the breaking up of the family system was an essential preliminary to the introduction of the New Moral Order.

But because he denounces indissoluble unions, entered

into frequently from other motives than that of mutual affection, it does not follow that he contemplated mere promiscuity. In fact such a misrepresentation of his meaning is almost excusable; he was so preoccupied with denouncing the old order that he left himself in the original Lectures no time to explain the system which he would substitute. In some later lectures which he delivered in Manchester in 1837 he supplies this omission.

“There will be, then, no motive or inducement for any parties to unite, except from pure affection arising from the most unreserved knowledge of each other’s character, in all respects, as far as it can be known before the union takes place. There will be no artificial obstacles in the way of permanent happy unions of the sexes; for under the arrangements of this new state of human existence, the affections will receive every aid which can be devised to induce them to be permanent; and under these arrangements, there can be no doubt that, as the parties will be placed as far as possible in the condition of lovers during their lives, the affections will be far more durable, and produce far more pleasure and enjoyment to the parties, and far less injury to society, than has ever yet been experienced, under any of the varied arrangements which have emanated from the imagined free-will of the human race” (p. 87).

Moreover, in an address given in London in 1833, he had outlined some regulations for marriage and divorce; providing that the union between the sexes should be formal, and should not be entered into until after three months’ public notice; and further that no separation should take place, even if both parties desired

it, until after a year of union and six months further notice, *i.e.* eighteen months in all.¹

In his proclamation of the Religion of the Millennium Owen is no less outspoken. In an editorial in No. 57 of the *New Moral World*² he essays to define the nature of the Power which controls the Universe. Of that power, he says, we can have no certain knowledge, but we may conjecture it is probable

“1. That an eternal, uncaused Existence has ever filled the Universe, and is therefore Omnipresent.

“2. That this eternal, Uncaused, Omnipresent Existence possesses attributes ‘to direct the atom and control the aggregate of Nature’; in other words to govern the Universe as it is governed.

“3. That these attributes, being eternal and infinite, are incomprehensible to man.

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“6. That if this Power had desired to make the nature of its existence known to man, it would have enabled him to comprehend it, without mystery or doubt.

“7. That as this knowledge has not yet been given to, or acquired by man, it is not essential to his well-being and happiness.

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¹ The regulations are quoted in an appendix to the fourth edition (1840) of *Lectures on Marriage*.

² Saturday, November 28, 1835, Vol. II., p. 33. The editorial was subsequently republished, together with a few illustrative extracts from other sources, as No. 6 of the Social Tracts, under the title *The Religion of the New Moral World*.



Robert Owen

From a lithograph published in Manchester about 1840.

ROBERT OWEN.

- “9. That the Power which made man cannot ever, in the slightest iota, be changed in its eternal course by the request or prayer of so small and insignificant a being as man is, when compared with the Universe and its operations.”

Religion, or the duty of man to this Power, Owen defined as follows :

“The whole duty of man is to attain the object of his existence, which is to be happy himself, to make his fellow-beings happy, and to endeavour to make the existence of all that is formed to feel pleasure and pain, as delightful as his knowledge and power, and their nature, will admit.”

In the millennium, he continues, there will be no temples, no forms and ceremonies, no mortification of flesh and spirit, no religious persecution ; no hard tasks to be done by man for the glory of God. There will be kindness and charity alike to Jew and Gentile, and “to produce happiness will be the only religion of man ; the worship of God will consist in the practice of useful industry ; in the acquisition of knowledge ; in uniformly speaking the language of truth ; and in the expression of the joyous feelings which a life in accordance with nature and truth is sure to produce.”

In the later part of the *Book of the New Moral World* he calls the religion of the future “The Religion of Truth,” and dwells more on this aspect of the case. The same idea is found in *The Social Bible*, a tract published by Hetherington, some time before 1841.

“I believe that the only worship that ought to be offered to a Supremely intelligent good principle, is

correct practice, that is, to speak the truth always in all simplicity, and to act at all times in perfect accordance with it.

“I believe that this practical worship of the supremely good principle of our nature is the highest and most sublime duty that man can perform to himself, to his fellow-beings and to all the intelligence that is in existence.”¹

¹ *The Social Bible*, p. 12. *The Social Bible*, though it bears Owen's name on the title page, was expressly disavowed by him in the discussion with Brindley (p. 74 of Brindley's version). It contains a brief and apparently accurate exposition of Owen's fundamental teachings.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HOLY WAR

AS will be seen from the confession of faith given at the end of the preceding chapter, Owen could not fairly be called an Atheist. He recognised a righteous and intelligent Power controlling the Universe, but denied, as many doctors of the Church have done, that man could comprehend the nature and attributes of that Power. In fact he was a Deist after the fashion of the eighteenth century. Like his other opinions his theology was borrowed from pre-revolutionary France. In these days he would, no doubt, have been labelled an Agnostic, and his views would have been regarded, even by the Church, with toleration or indifference. But the Church was less tolerant sixty years ago. And some of Owen's followers were neither so moderate nor so modest as their master. In the letter already quoted announcing the publication of Tracts 5 and 6, Samuel Cornish gives striking testimony to this effect :

“Our friends, many of them, are generally too much inclined to push our principles to Atheism. This I hold to be extremely unwise, and indeed unphilosophical and irrational. What are they going to gain by taking up the position of Atheism ? why nothing, and worse

than nothing! Can they prove their assertion that there is no God? certainly not! They cannot prove a negative! Why then, like David's fool, do they make the assertion?

"In this matter you have acted most judiciously. I wish I could say that your disciples generally speak and act with the same wisdom."

But Owen himself was not free from reproach in the matter. If he had not preached Atheism he had denounced with indiscriminate bitterness all the religions of the old world. In the *Book of the New Moral World* and his other publications, he habitually spoke of religion as a kind of insanity, and as the cause of most of the evil in the world. Thus, to take a single example, he writes:

"The errors which have created the Priesthood, and the errors which the Priesthood have created, through this long reign of mystery, falsehood and absurdities, have made the human race so artificial and irrational, that they now imagine it will be impossible that man can ever become truthful, virtuous and happy, and they say that evil must ever exist, because 'Man is bad by nature.' The Priesthood first adopt most effective measures to create vice, and to force men to become bad, and then they turn round, after having effectually executed their purpose, and say that 'men are bad by nature.' . . . All the theology now taught," he continues, "is worse than useless: in the new moral world the priesthood must be abolished, and all works of theology destroyed."¹

And when he spoke of the priesthood as "the

¹ *Book of the New Moral World*, Part III., pp. 55, 56.

chief of the Satanic Institutions of the world,"¹ and of celibacy as a virtue only "according to the unnatural notions and imaginations of a most degraded order of men called the Priesthood," he hardly bettered matters by explaining in other passages that the priests themselves were but part and parcel of the old moral order, making it not more than themselves made by it. The unregenerate man was prone to confound the prophet's lofty indignation against sin with mere human contempt and ill-will for the sinner.

The public platform afforded ample opportunity for the expression of the views of the Socialists and of their opponents. There grew up a practice at this time amongst the Socialists of issuing or accepting challenges to meet champions of orthodoxy in formal discussions—often lasting several nights. One of the earliest of these discussions took place between Owen himself and a Nonconformist minister named Roebuck, in Manchester—at that time the headquarters of the new cult—in May, 1837. Owen's share in the discussion was to expound the Five Fundamental Facts, and the rest of the system with which we are already familiar. Briefly, he contended that a man's character is entirely formed for him, and that it can be traced to two distinct sources—inherited organisation and the influence of external (post-natal) circumstances—the latter outweighing the former more than a hundred to one.² Man's belief is not a matter of will, but of

¹ *Lectures on Marriage*, p. 4.

² *Public Discussion between R. Owen and the Rev. J. H. Roebuck*, p. 10. Second Edition, revised and authorised by the Speakers. London, 1837.

external circumstances, mainly geographical. In fact, man is a geographical animal, and the several religions of the world so many "geographical insanities." Of God we can know nothing, nor of a future life. "Anything we can say on the subject will not alter the future state of existence, but sure I am, that a life of intelligence, charity and kindness here, will be the best possible preparation for a future state" (p. 32).

On the other hand, Roebuck proclaimed that Owen would drag Jehovah from His seat in the Universe, and make the evils of the world ten thousand times worse than before. Owen's new religion might suit those in good health; but what had it to offer to the sick and the bereaved? In short, the discussion for the most part proceeded on parallel lines and the adversaries never came to close quarters. But Roebuck showed himself the better debater, and made one strong point against his opponent:

"According to Mr. Owen's system, we are but mere machines, impelled by a force over which we have no control, and we are the mere sport of circumstances, and move on by their influence in that precise direction in which they chance to carry us. And yet, strange to say, we have the power to alter and control the constitution of the circumstances by which we ourselves are constantly surrounded and controlled. . . . Mr. Owen cannot explain to us consistently with his scheme, how out of the rubbish of the old irrational world, he sprang up so beautifully rational."¹

¹ pp. 22 and 57.

To this argument Owen gave no reply. Indeed, the whole discussion may serve to illustrate Lewis Carroll's famous postulate—that an argument may be conducted round any point, and at any distance from that point. But if the combatants, and Owen especially, were more potent in assertion than in demonstration, there was no display of heat or rancour. Owen was invariably courteous, and Roebuck proved himself no less so. The whole debate was conducted in a seemly fashion, and the two antagonists parted, as they had met, with mutual respect and goodwill.¹

Of a different temper were some other theological antagonists of this period. From 1837 onwards there were several self-constituted champions of the faith who made it their business—and apparently a not unprofitable business—to go about from town to town delivering lectures and stirring up public feeling against the Socialists. Barker, Pallister and Brindley were the most conspicuous of these crusaders. The first named some years later became a Unitarian, and subsequently a Spiritualist. In the transition stage between these two faiths he wrote a manly letter to Owen, acknowledging that he had done him injustice :

“Accept my thanks, venerable friend, for your life-long labours in the cause of truth, of freedom, and of social improvement. I did you great wrong in the days of zeal for orthodoxy. I am glad I have lived to see my error, to retract my

¹ There is a kindly reference to Roebuck's death a year or two later in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 37.

reproaches, and that you have lived to receive this retraction.”¹

But Brindley was a man of a different type; an egotist and bully of the baser kind, eager to find an arena suitable for the display of his own powers as defender of the faith, and not over-nice in his choice of weapons for the purpose. In the winter of 1839-1840, and for some years later, he went about from town to town lecturing against the Socialists and stirring up strife. As he was a fluent speaker, and apparently well-practised in all the arts of the platform orator, he created some consternation in the ranks of the Owenites, and the Manchester Correspondence contains appeals to Owen from Huddersfield, Rochdale, Bradford, Leeds, and elsewhere, describing Brindley's campaign, and urging Owen himself to come forth and do battle with so redoubtable a champion. Owen did eventually meet Brindley on a public platform, as will be described later. Meanwhile, it is enough to say that, not content with seeking to overthrow his adversaries in argument, Brindley is stated to have persuaded master manufacturers to give their men notice to leave the ranks of the Socialists, on pain of dismissal from their employment.²

Further, in a series of speeches and tracts Brindley made charges of gross immorality against several leading Socialists, named and unnamed. However pure Owen's motives, however high his example, it is certain that

¹ Manchester Correspondence, July 2, 1854.

² Letter from Charles Howarth, Rochdale (Manchester Correspondence), December 9, 1839; Holyoake's *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 325, edition of 1875.

the teachings of the *Lectures on Marriage* would be calculated to lead to consequences of the kind ; and the reckless and intemperate language employed by Owen could only make these results more probable. It is not worth while now to rake up old scandals ; but some of Brindley's most serious charges were made with the names of the offenders, and these charges do not appear to have been denied by the Socialists concerned. In one case, indeed, a denial was offered which was more damning than silence would have been. One of the most conspicuous figures, next to Owen himself, in the Socialist organisation was accused in one of Brindley's pamphlets¹ of having deserted his wife and family, and of having seduced his sister-in-law. At a public meeting in Leeds the accused and his wife contradicted with much emphasis the first charge, and kept silence about the second. Whether Brindley's charges were in the main well founded or not, the fact that they were made and were not contradicted brought much odium upon the Socialists.

But other circumstances at this time contributed to bring the religious views of the Socialists prominently before the public. On June 26, 1839, Robert Owen was presented in due form to the Queen by Lord Melbourne, and took the opportunity to lay before Her Majesty an address "from the Congress of the Delegates of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists, soliciting the Government to appoint parties to investigate measures which the Congress proposes to ameliorate the condition of Society." The presentation was unfavourably commented upon in the public press,

¹ *The Immoralities of Socialism*, published in 1840.

and the "Philalethean Society, or Society for Peaceably Repressing Infidelity," which had its headquarters in Edinburgh, presented a humble address to the Queen, representing the harm that might come from the countenance given by Her Majesty to a notorious unbeliever.

In the following year the doctrines of Socialism became the subject of debate in the House of Lords. The accuser was Henry Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, an intolerant Churchman, who had made himself conspicuous by opposing Catholic Emancipation and was later to win notoriety in connection with the Gorham controversy on Baptismal regeneration; a rancorous political partisan, who owed his advancement to the Bench to the services rendered to the Tory party by his not too scrupulous pen.¹

An occasion for the Bishop's intervention was found in the presentation of a petition from the clergy, magistrates and traders of the town of Birmingham on the subject of Socialism. In presenting the petition on January 24, 1840, he spoke at some length, and renewed the attack on February 4, in moving for an inquiry into the subject. The Bishop began by upbraiding the Government—the Liberal Ministry under Lord Melbourne—and especially the Home Secretary, Lord Normanby, who had held that office for barely five months, with their apathy in that they had done

¹ Philpotts was, as Lloyd Jones reminds us, the "Reverend Pamphleteer" of Moore's satirical verses:

Stop, stop, said Truth, but vain her cry
Left far away in the rear,
She heard but the usual "gay Good-bye"
From her faithless Pamphleteer.

nothing, and apparently intended to do nothing, to check the advance of Socialism. Yet the Government, he contended, must be aware that under a Statute 57 George III. (an Act passed in the panic of 1817 and aimed at the Spencean and Hampden Clubs) the very existence of a Society such as the Universal Community Society, having branches all over the country and an organised propaganda by missionaries, was illegal: it was illegal, moreover, in its avowed object, which was to alter the laws and institutions of the country. The fundamental doctrine of the Socialists—that man was not a responsible agent—cut at the roots of all human society. Further, Owen explicitly taught that the existing organisation of society was faulty, and must be amended, peaceably, if possible, but amended anyhow. In this connection the Bishop quoted a passage from Owen's discussion with Roebuck—

“It is to the interest of every individual in the family of man that this great and glorious change should now be commenced, and that all Governments should lend their aid to perfect it, that it may be produced without force, peaceably and by reason. But should the Governments now decline, from ignorance of their present position, to take the lead in this great work, then will the people of necessity undertake and accomplish it for themselves and for Governments.”

Moreover—the Bishop continued—Owen had constantly denounced the institution of marriage, and the Christian religion. A few typical utterances by Owen, G. A. Fleming and other Socialists were quoted in this connection. There were other horrid blasphemies and immoralities, he added, with the recital of which

he would not pain their Lordships' ears. There was a book by Owen which had been put into the Bishop's hands—the reference is no doubt to the *Marriages of the Priesthood*—and one passage in that book had been placed before the episcopal eyes, but he had never since permitted his mind to be polluted by looking at it again. Some of the worst blasphemies and obscenities he could not bring himself to quote, not even to convince the noble Marquis (Normanby) of the necessity for prompt action—he could not and would not do it.

The Bishop then proceeded to cite illustrations of the terrible results which had already, as he asserted, followed from these damnable doctrines—cases of suicide, murder, and sudden death. Next, he pointed out that this was no obscure and dwindling sect, but a powerful and growing organisation, having sixty branches throughout the country; that the whole kingdom had been mapped out into fourteen districts, each with its due complement of missionaries, who regularly lectured in no fewer than 350 towns; there was a weekly paper—the *New Moral World*—devoted exclusively to the propaganda, and many friendly organs in the outside press; the sale of tracts in the previous year had reached 500,000; the Society had erected large halls for meetings in several of the manufacturing towns; and they were now buying or leasing estates in order to carry out their economic ideals. Moreover, the Society had adherents in official quarters: W. Pare, a Vice-President of their Central Board, was Superintendent Registrar at Birmingham; the Mayor of Coventry had lent the Guildhall to a Socialist lecturer;

and after lending it in turn to Brindley had repented his impartiality, and had cut short that most respectable gentleman's eloquence after a quite inadequate number of days. Moreover the Mayor was credibly reported to have subscribed to the Socialist funds. The Mayor of another city—he hesitated to name it, but the Bishop of London supplied the omission—the Mayor of the Cathedral City of Lincoln had also lent the Guildhall for Socialist lectures. The Bishop had always considered the Municipal Corporations Reform Act to be a most disgraceful measure, and these sad occurrences amply justified his opinion. Again, he had received information through a clergyman, who had recently discovered with horror that part of the new Community farm at Queenwood was actually situated in his own parish, that music, dancing and singing took place there on Sunday afternoons. Finally the First Minister of the Crown had recently introduced the arch heretic, the author of all these damnable doctrines, into the presence of his Sovereign.

The Bishop would hesitate to suggest that the neglect and indifference of the Government in the face of this grave national danger arose from any sympathy with the Socialists, or from any anticipation of political advantage; he would prefer to ascribe it to ignorance—an ignorance culpable indeed, but not perhaps criminal. Now, however, that their eyes were opened, there could be no excuse for continued inaction:—"He defied the noble Marquis at the head of the Home Department to forbear proceeding, and he called upon him in the face of that House, the Sanctuary of the justice of the Country, to give their Lordships an assurance that

night that he would inquire into these facts now brought under his notice, and if on inquiry he found them to be anything like true, that he would not expose his Sovereign and himself to the reproach of having abandoned the best, the most sacred, and the most holy interests of mankind."

Such in substance was the Bishop's indictment. No doubt the Socialists had been guilty of many extravagances and absurdities, and in the insolence of their new-found freedom they had no doubt been heedlessly or wantonly offensive in their treatment of beliefs and institutions which they claimed to have outgrown. In demonstrating this the Bishop had an easy task, and perhaps his carefully elaborated indignation achieved its effect with the larger gallery for which it was, no doubt, intended. But he did not succeed in making the flesh of the Lords temporal to creep. In fact throughout the torrent of eloquence the Churchman's zeal for religion and morality appears to have been less conspicuous than the politician's eagerness to snatch a party advantage. As the *Patriot* wrote at the time: "We could have wished to hear from a Christian Bishop more of lamentation at the immorality of the Socialists than of declamation over the illegality of their proceedings, and it would have been as well to avoid the appearance of acting the part of a calumniator in reference to Her Majesty's Ministers, at the very moment of invoking the arm of power against the Owenites. Ill-natured persons might be led to suppose that, after all, Robert Owen was not quite so obnoxious to the Bishop as the Marquis of Normanby."¹ A rhymed paraphrase

¹ Quoted in the *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1084.

of the speech which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of January 28 runs to the same effect: the last six lines are as follows:

He never believed a rash report,
But who took Robert Owen to Court?
He would not offend, but would fain be knowing
If Normanby was not as loose as Owen;
And would ask, nought meaning by the hint,
Did *he* believe in God, for Owen didn't!

Ministers, in the persons of Lord Normanby and Lord Melbourne, replied to the Bishop's challenge by denying that the question was as serious or as urgent as the prelate contended. The movement had been going on for some years, under Whig and Tory Governments alike, and there was no indication of the rapid and alarming growth which the Bishop's speech portended. "The few isolated extracts from letters which the Bishop called evidence," said Lord Normanby, "afforded no justification for the very extraordinary measures which he had called upon the Government to take"; the speaker felt also some misgivings "as to the accuracy of the statements which had been made by the Right Reverend Prelate, as to the fairness of his inferences, and the charity of the imputations which he had thrown out on the Socialist body and on the Government."

As to the Act of 1817, if the Socialist Society by its constitution came within the terms of the Act, so would many religious and philanthropic Societies, with some of which the Right Reverend Prelate might himself be connected. In any case it had been the practice of successive Governments for some years past

to allow considerable freedom of speech in these matters ; and it was doubtful, even if legal offences could be proved, whether the advertisement of a prosecution would not do more to advance the cause than any punishment which the law could inflict would effect to retard its progress.

Lord Melbourne followed in the same strain. He admitted that he had been imprudent in presenting Owen at Court without inquiring more particularly into the nature of the doctrine and practices which he was assisting to propagate ; but their Lordships, by voting an enquiry into the system of Socialism, were proposing "to introduce him at Court a second time, and in a way that would give him and his sect a much greater and stronger encouragement" than had been given by the original presentation. Lord Lansdowne sympathetically enquired whether the Bishop, who had told them that night how he had polluted his mind in the cause of righteousness by enquiring into the doctrines of Owen, had incurred further pollution by examining the kindred question of St. Simon and his followers. That further pollution, the speaker pointed out, would have convinced the Bishop that these systems, if left alone, tend to perish of their own absurdities.

On the other side more Bishops and the Duke of Wellington pressed for the enquiry, which was in the event agreed to without a division.

Of the enquiry we hear no more. But William Pare was forced to resign his office as Registrar ; not because he had painted up at the door of his office his title as Vice-President of the Universal Community Society, nor because he had presided at a meeting where the existence



From a contemporary newspaper, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

THE GOBLIN SPRITE ; OR, THE OLD WOMEN AND THE BUGABOO.

Mother Fillpurse (Bishop Philpotts of Exeter),
 Mother Blightfield (Bishop Blomfield of London),
 Mother Cantaway (Archbishop of Canterbury), and
 Mother Wellington chasing the New Moral World.

of God was called in question—for the Bishop's statements on these matters appear to have been as ill-founded as most of his detailed charges—but because the Home Secretary held that Pare's intimate connection with an Association holding the views advanced by the Socialists was incompatible with an official position under the Government of the country.

The flame lighted by the Bishop was a twelvemonth later fanned to a conflagration. On the evenings of January 5, 6, and 7, 1841, Robert Owen and John Brindley met in the amphitheatre at Bristol to discuss the question—"What is Socialism and what would be its practical effects on Society?"

Brindley, the most foul-mouthed of all the antagonists of Socialism, had already made charges against Owen's conduct as a husband; and had further impeached his personal integrity in his dealings with the fortunes of his sisters-in-law. On this account Owen had, in the previous year, refused to meet Brindley on a public platform,² and it would have been well if he had persisted in his refusal at Bristol. But he allowed himself to be over-persuaded, from fear apparently of being thought to shrink from the ordeal.

Brindley behaved after his kind. It is difficult even now to read the records of the debate, preserved in the official account issued by Brindley himself, without experiencing feelings of shame and indignation stronger than Owen's system would have sanctioned. Brindley,

¹ For an exposure of other misstatements see *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1107.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 4.

³ See the correspondence printed at the beginning of the Home Colonisation Society's report of the proceedings.

a popular lecturer who knew his business, skilled in cheap rhetoric and effective repartee, employed all the arts of the platform hooligan to bring ridicule and discredit on his aged antagonist, too simple to foil the attacks, and too little used to insolence to know how to deal with it. The debate was turned by Brindley himself on Owen's personal views on religion and on marriage. Owen's exposition of his beliefs, especially his views on marriage, as already shown, lent itself only too easily to misrepresentation, and Brindley used his opportunities to the full. He began by quoting some of Owen's utterances on the religions of the world, and then with the connivance and ultimately the active assistance of the chairman repeatedly pressed Owen to give a direct answer to the question—did he or did he not believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God? When Owen had ultimately admitted that he did not accept every word of the Bible as true, Brindley triumphantly acclaimed him as an infidel and an atheist.

Again, taking passages from *The Marriages of the Priesthood*, isolated from their surroundings, and using them as texts for the display of virtuous rhetoric, he readily achieved his purpose of exciting the passions of the audience against the venerable Socialist. But he was not content with this measure of success. Brindley had undertaken at the beginning of the discussion to quote only from Owen's acknowledged works. But in his search for telling extracts on the Marriage question, he cited from a lecture given by Campbell, one of the Social Missionaries, and from an editorial in the *New Moral World* written by Fleming, just as, in his tract published in the previous year, *The Marriage System of Socialism*,

he had quoted some passages from Shelley, attributing the quotation to Owen. When Owen in the course of the debate pointed out this last misattribution, Brindley justified his action, on the ground apparently that the quotations were contained in a pamphlet bearing Owen's name on the title page.¹

Again, he sought to rouse odium against Owen by reference to Robert Dale Owen's *Moral Physiology*, and the chairman again lent his assistance by dramatically protesting to the audience that the passages shown to him in that book were too filthy to be read.

A more serious and a more reckless, if not actually wilful, perversion was Brindley's repeated statement that Owen's New Marriage System contemplated a three-months trial, "a new wife quarterly," as it was paraphrased.² "The operatives of this country," he said, "are a virtuous-minded set of people—they do not

¹ The passages in question are to be found in one of the notes to "Queen Mab," on the line "Even love is sold." One of the passages quoted runs:

"Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolise according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage." Then follows the passage a few lines lower down beginning, "That which will result from the abolition of marriage. . . . Should she look in the mirror of Nature." In the first (1838) edition of *The Marriages of the Priesthood* the whole of the note from Shelley was printed as an appendix to Owen's Lectures. This had been done, as is explained in a note to the version of the Owen-Brindley debate published by the Home Colonisation Society (London, 1841), without Owen's knowledge. But Brindley's mistake is without excuse, as the authorship of the passages is clearly stated in the pamphlet.

² *Public Discussion between John Brindley and Robert Owen*. Printed, without correction by either party, from the Verbatim Report of the Shorthand Writers (1841), p. 62.

want, they will not accept, the foul offer of a three months' trial."¹ It was in vain that Owen pointed out that this was a gross misrepresentation; that three months, under his new system, was to be the period of notice given before the marriage could be celebrated. Brindley would not retract, and the chairman took no notice of the matter.²

Of the conduct of the debate from the chair it is difficult to speak with patience. The chairman indeed delegated his function of timing the speakers—each was limited to half an hour at a time—to a clerical friend, and there were complaints that the time was not allotted with strict impartiality. Owen on one occasion significantly rose when the sands of the hour-glass had run down, but Brindley appears to have been allowed to continue speaking for some minutes longer. But the chairman himself, though loudly protesting his complete impartiality, practically acted as a second to Brindley throughout the debate. He allowed the fellow to bully and bluster at his will, to indulge in irrelevant bits of stage business—such as the dramatic presentation of a Bible to Owen—and to divert the debate into serviceable side issues. Further, he not only allowed the public to interrupt Owen, but he himself throughout the debate acted as the mouthpiece of these interruptions, and insisted upon Owen's breaking the thread of his discourse

¹ *Public Discussion between John Brindley and Robert Owen* (1841), p. 71.

² In fact under Owen's system a divorce could not take place even by mutual consent until eighteen months after marriage *at the earliest*. The parties could not give notice of their desire to separate until twelve months after marriage; and must then return to live together for six months longer before the divorce would be granted. (*Lectures on Marriage*, fourth edition, p. 89.)

to meet this or that objection raised by some speaker in the body of the hall. And when Owen, unapt at debate and confused by the discourtesy shown to him, and by these continual interruptions, contradicted himself or wandered in his argument, the chairman, with a spite which was too mean a passion to deserve the name of *odium theologicum*, took delight in increasing the old man's embarrassment by persisting in his unmannerly interference.

At the conclusion of the meeting the reverend timekeeper proposed a resolution condemnatory of Socialism; one of Owen's supporters who endeavoured to speak against it failed to obtain a hearing, and the resolution was carried with hardly a dissentient voice.

Owen's meeting with Brindley was no doubt a mistake, as the Socialists themselves recognised. Some of the Socialist Missionaries had already met Brindley on public platforms, and had not come off second best; Lloyd Jones, in particular, had held a discussion with him at Macclesfield just a month before the meeting with Owen, and vainly endeavoured to pin him down to a second meeting at Bristol immediately afterwards. But as the secretary of the Bristol Branch said of the Brindley-Owen debate, "it could hardly be called a discussion, as neither of the disputants took any notice of the arguments or observations of his opponent . . . the general opinion here is that Mr. Owen has acted very unwisely in meeting Mr. B., and that he is not qualified to meet such an opponent."¹ The Bilston Branch forwarded an address to Owen, requesting him,

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 70.

in the interests of his own health and comfort, not to waste his powers in future over such an unworthy opponent.¹

Owen in his reply characteristically justifies his peculiar method of conducting the so-called "discussion"—"It would have been the loss of most precious moments for me to have attended to anything Mr. Brindley might say, instead of using them to tell the world what I wished it to learn from myself."²

But if the cause of Socialism suffered some discredit through Owen's ineffective championship, the cause of true religion met with deeper indignity in being misrepresented by a person of the type of Brindley. Some of the newspapers in their reports of the discussion recognised this.³ Later, Brindley received a severe snub from the Manchester magistrates. An application was made to them to stop the delivery of a lecture to be given by Lloyd Jones—"A comparison of the characters of Moses, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther and Robert Owen." Brindley, in supporting the application, said "he should feel it his duty to attend the Hall of Science next day, and he should put out placards." He had no doubt a riot would ensue, if the police did not attend."

To which Mr. Herapath, one of the magistrates, replied: "I know nothing of any duty incumbent on Mr. Brindley more than on any other member of the

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³ See a report in the *Bristol Mercury*, quoted in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 83. "As far as manner is concerned, Mr. Owen had distinctly the advantage—truth can derive no aid from petulance and assumption."

Community. If any breach of the peace occur, we shall hold those who caused it responsible, whatever may be their opinions.”¹

But the spoken word had its effect, and the oratory of the Bishop and of Brindley did not fail to bring forth fruit after its kind. For some years previously, indeed,—largely, it would seem, owing to Brindley’s inflammatory harangues—Owen and his followers had been liable to insult, if not to actual violence, and difficulties had been thrown in the way of their propaganda. Thus William Legg, an Independent Minister, writes to Owen from Reading in December, 1838 :

“I condemned the policy which shut you out of the Town Hall, . . . I consider such exclusion as nearly allied to the proceedings of the Star Chamber, and as part of a system that would, if it could, employ physical force to control the operations of mind. All that truth wants is a fair field, and the free use of her weapons, and instead of slamming the doors of a public Assembly Room in the face of a benevolent though mistaken fellow man, I would that those who did this thing had met you there to confute your opinions by sound argument.”

Again, a twelvemonth later, Dr. Jacobson writes from Huddersfield on December 16, 1839 :

“I was very sorry indeed when I heard that the commercial travellers at the George Hotel insulted you, and felt more indignation when the public press sanctioned the sad affair. Every man who has a soul to

¹ From report in the *Bristol Mercury* of February 6, 1841, quoted in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX, p. 119.

comprehend honour and his duty, must respect you for being the friend to the working classes—to the white slaves who are born in the most Christian country, commonly called, the paradise of Clouds, or England; those homeless people brought home to England honour and fortune, and the English Capitalists repay them them with naked distress. I am not a Socialist, but esteem and respect you, and if I can be of any service to you in Germany or France, I will do it with pleasure.”¹

But from 1840 onwards the Holy War was waged with increasing vigour against the Socialists in all parts of the kingdom. The methods at first employed were of the crudest kind. A large hall was being erected in Manchester, to serve as a meeting-place of the Owenites—a hall so large and imposing that it had received the name of the Social Cathedral.² At the end of April, 1840, a few weeks before the time fixed for the formal opening, a deliberate attempt was made to burn the building, fires consisting of shavings dipped in turpentine having been kindled in three separate places simultaneously. Fortunately the attempt was discovered, but the perpetrators were never brought to justice.³

In June of the same year Brindley lectured in the Pottery Towns against Socialism, and so stirred up the people that a prominent manufacturer, Mr. Wood of Burslem, discharged from his employment some

¹ Manchester Correspondence; letters of December 22, 1838, and December 16, 1839.

² It was afterwards bought by the city to serve as a Public Library (Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 297).

³ *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1295, May 9, 1840.

workmen whom he found to favour Socialist principles.¹ Further, Owen was shut out from the theatre at Newcastle (Staffs.), the use of which had been promised him for his lecture; and he was subsequently refused the use of the Town Hall at Stoke-on-Trent.² Eventually he proceeded to Burslem to deliver his lecture in the Social Institution in that town. But the clerical party had been before him, and a handbill was circulated through the town calling upon the people to "assemble, before the meeting, in a peaceable and orderly manner," and "to declare this poison shall no more be retailed among us." It is easy by an appeal to religious prejudices to cause a crowd to assemble; it is more difficult to ensure that the resulting assemblage shall behave in a "peaceable and orderly manner." As a matter of fact the populace was summoned to this peaceable and orderly assemblage by the sound of drums and fifes, and it is said that liquor was freely distributed among them. In the circumstances both parties may be accounted fortunate that the resulting disturbance did not have graver consequences. What actually happened was that when Owen appeared on the scene he was mobbed and forced to take refuge in an adjoining house and wait there for some hours. A. Campbell, one of the most prominent Social Missionaries, was chased by the mob for some distance and roughly handled. The members of the audience who had assembled in the hall to hear the lecture were attacked and maltreated; and the committee, including several women, had to barricade themselves in a room at the end of the hall, and there stand a regular siege. None

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

of the Socialists seem to have been seriously hurt, but there were several minor injuries from sticks and stones, and considerable damage was done to the hall of the Social Institution. No arrests, however, were made ; and the Owenite accounts assert that the Chief Constable and the clergy were present as interested but passive spectators, if they did not actually encourage the rioters.¹

Later in the year Brindley lectured at Congleton and Macclesfield, being met in debate at the latter town, as already said, by Lloyd Jones. In both towns it is said that numbers of Socialist workmen were discharged from their employment in consequence of Brindley's eloquence. Lloyd Jones was successful, however, in his efforts to get some of these men reinstated.²

At the beginning of the following year, 1841, there were disturbances at Bristol, shortly after the debate between Owen and Brindley. The mob's violence could in this case also be directly traced to Brindley's inflammatory speeches. On Sunday, January 17, some persons created a disturbance during a lecture by G. Simkins delivered in the newly opened Socialist Hall at Broadmead, Bristol. The lecture was perforce cut short, and the hall having been cleared with some difficulty, the Socialist Committee proceeded to hold a meeting behind the barricaded doors. But the mob burst in the doors, "rushed in, and the scene of devastation commenced. The dome lights were smashed, the gas fittings torn down ; forms and platforms de-

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., pp. 16, 25.

² See his *Life of Robert Owen*, pp. 365-7. See also *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 398.

destroyed," and an attempt was made to burst open the door of the inner room, where the committee with some women and children had taken refuge. One of the committee made his way out through the skylight and went to summon the police. Eventually, before any personal violence had occurred, the police arrived on the scene, and the Socialists were conducted safely out of the hall. One of the aggressors was caught, brought before the magistrates on the following day, and bound over to keep the peace. Summonses were issued against others for destruction of property.¹

On the news of these events reaching London, Lloyd Jones was despatched to Bristol, arriving there on the morning of the 20th. He attended a lecture given by Brindley that evening, and delivered a challenge to the lecturer to meet him, as one of the authorised Social Missionaries, in a public discussion. Eventually the challenge was accepted, and a meeting agreed upon; but Brindley finally evaded the issue.²

On the following Sunday, January 24, Lloyd Jones lectured in the Broadmead Hall—which had in the mean-

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., pp. 69, 70. Lloyd Jones (*Life*, p. 368) says that Owen himself was present on the occasion of the riot, and was only saved from the mob by the courageous efforts of his friends, who fought their way through. I can find no mention of this incident in the *New Moral World*; and it seems unlikely that Owen would again have visited Bristol within a few days of his discussion with Brindley—which Lloyd Jones does not mention in this connection.

² See the correspondence between Brindley's committee and the secretary of the Bristol Socialists, published in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., pp. 134, 135. (The numbering of the pages is duplicated—as is not infrequently the case in the paging of the *New Moral World*—so that there are two pages numbered 134, and two numbered 135. The correspondence referred to extends over all four pages.)

time been hurriedly fitted up again by a number of young volunteer workmen—to an audience which was estimated to consist of about three thousand persons. On leaving the hall he found himself in the midst of an angry mob, who had been waiting for his appearance. He managed to take refuge in a public house, and was ultimately rescued by the police. On the following night the same scene was repeated, and Lloyd Jones again had to be escorted into safety by the police. After this the disturbance ceased, and on Sunday, January 31, Jones was able to deliver without disturbance to a crowded audience the lecture already referred to on “The characters of Moses, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther, and Owen.” Brindley and many of his friends were present.¹

But the clerical party soon found more powerful weapons. On June 11, 1840, Isaac Higginbottom and two others were summoned before the Borough Court at Manchester, on an information laid by the Rev. Mr. Kidd, Incumbent of St. Matthias' Church, and charged with having collected money from certain persons as the price of admission to a lecture given in the Hall of Science—for so the Socialist meeting-place was named. The information was laid under the Act 39 George III. c. 79, entitled “An Act for the more effectual suppression of Societies for seditious purposes.” Section 15 enacted: “Whereas divers places have of late been used for delivering lectures or discourses and of holding debates . . . which lectures, discourses and debates have in many instances been of a seditious or

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., pp. 102, 103; Lloyd Jones, *Life*, pp. 369-71.

immoral nature . . . be it further enacted that any house, room, field or other place, at or in which any lecture or discourse shall be publicly delivered, or any public debate shall be held on any subject whatever . . . to which any person shall be admitted by the payment of money, shall be deemed a disorderly house within the intent and meaning of the said Act . . . unless the same shall have been previously licensed in the manner hereinafter mentioned." The licence mentioned was to be obtained at General, Quarter or Special Sessions. The penalty to be incurred by any one taking part in the unlawful proceedings was £20 for each offence.

On the behalf of the Socialists it was contended that an Act of 1817—the same which had been appealed to by the Bishop of Exeter—made an exception to the Act of 1799 as regards places of religious worship ; and a certificate was produced, duly countersigned by the Registrar of the Bishop of Chester in accordance with the provisions of another Act (52 Geo. III. c. 155), in which Isaac Higginbottom and others "do hereby certify that the building called the Hall of Science in Camp Field, Manchester, is intended to be forthwith used as a place of religious worship by an assembly or congregation of Protestants called Rational Religionists."

The prosecution contended, however, that the certificate in question did not exempt the parties from the penalties of the Act of 1799 ; and in the event the magistrates, after much deliberation, concurred and gave judgment against the defendants. Notice was at once given to apply for a writ of *certiorari*, to remove the

case to the Court of Queen's Bench.¹ The Socialists further retaliated by applying for summonses against the Rev. Joseph Barker—the well-known anti-Socialist lecturer—and a Mr. Sturgeon for delivering lectures in unlicensed halls, and taking money for admission.²

Whatever may be thought of the taste and policy of the original prosecution, the clerical party were not without justification for their next step. The Socialists, it will be seen, when assailed, had defended themselves as being "a congregation of Protestants called Rational Religionists" assembled for religious worship.

The clerical party now called upon Robert Buchanan, father of the poet of that name, who had lectured in the Hall of Science, to make the declaration prescribed by the Act of 19 George III., entitled "An Act for the further relief of Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters." The declaration prescribed by the Act ran as follows:—"I, A. B., do solemnly declare in the presence of Almighty God that I am a Christian and a Protestant, and, as such, that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as commonly received among the Protestant Churches, do contain the revealed will of God, and that I do receive the same as the rule of my doctrine and practice."

Refusal to make this declaration would involve heavy penalties for any repetition of the lecturing or teaching.

It was the contention of the prosecution that, as the Hall of Science had been registered as a place of worship belonging to a body of Protestant Dissenters, it was a

¹ The application was granted in the following November (*New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 335). I have not been able to trace the result of the trial.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p., 1337.



From a contemporary newspaper, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

PROTESTANTISM versus SOCIALISM; OR, THE REVIVAL OF GOOD OLD TIMES.

fair inference that those who lectured or conducted the services there must be Dissenting Ministers or Schoolmasters as contemplated by the Act. The magistrates took this view—on the face of it not an unreasonable one—and in the exercise of the discretion conferred upon them by the Act¹ called upon Buchanan to make the declaration and take the oaths of supremacy and abjuration also prescribed by the Act. Buchanan declined to comply until he had received an authoritative explanation of the meaning of the terms “Protestant,” “Christian,” and “belief in the Scriptures.” Further, he professed himself unable to give a direct answer to the question whether he believed in a future state of rewards and punishment, and without this the magistrates held that he was unable to take the oath. In the event the defendant was fined £2 10s.²

It is to be noted that an editorial of this date in the *New Moral World* (July 4, 1840) expressly advocated the making of the declaration by Socialist lecturers on the grounds, first, that the words used were not to be interpreted literally, but with such latitude as the clergy in a recent debate in the House of Lords had claimed for themselves in subscribing to the 39 Articles; and, secondly, that “long and earnest study of the books to which reference is made has convinced us that they contain all the elements of Socialism, and that its political economy, its doctrines of justice, equality, and community of goods; its fraternity and charity; its opposition to

¹ The magistrates defended this exercise of their discretion on the express ground that it had been proved to them that Mr. Kidd's congregation had suffered pain and annoyance from the Socialist propaganda carried on among them.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., pp. 9, 18, 29, etc.

scribes and Pharisees, to priests and oppressors, may all be drawn from, defended, and supported by them."

An anonymous correspondent, who signs himself "A Missionary of the Protestant Dissenters commonly called Rational Religionists," justifies the making of the declaration on similar grounds.¹ Others, amongst whom was Mr. G. J. Holyoake, dissented strongly from this casuistical view, and defended honesty as the best policy in the long run.

In the event two only of the Missionaries made the declaration. Robert Buchanan, six weeks after his original refusal, came forward again before the magistrates at Manchester on August 11, 1840; professed his belief in a future state after death of rewards and punishments, made the declaration, subscribed the oaths, and became the Rev. Robert Buchanan.²

In February of the following year Lloyd Jones was summoned at Bristol to take the oath. "I attended," he writes, "at one o'clock for the purpose of taking the oath. The Office was crowded by gentlemen who seemed curious to see the performance. It passed off very comfortably. I took it without any words. I am now, therefore, the Rev. Lloyd Jones."³

There were at this time also prosecutions for blasphemy against the Socialists, of which three at least were successful. G. J. Holyoake, Charles Southwell and two

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 39.

² *Sun* (London), August 14, 1840. The *Sun* does not mention Manchester, but it is clear from the name of the magistrate, Maude, that the proceedings took place in that city. See also Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 243. The incident is not apparently mentioned in the *New Moral World*.

³ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 118.

others, dissenting from the time-serving views advocated by G. A. Fleming in the *New Moral World*, issued an organ of their own—the *Oracle of Reason*. For an article in No. 4 of this periodical Southwell was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and a fine of £100.¹ George Adams, the publisher of the *Oracle of Reason*, for a blasphemous article published in No. 25, which had apparently been written by Holyoake, received one month's imprisonment. Finally Mr. Holyoake, on his way to visit his colleague Southwell in prison, himself fell into the hands of the enemy. He gave a public lecture on "Home Colonisation, Emigration and the Poor Laws." At the conclusion of the lecture one James Bartram, who had been put up by the clerical party to entrap the lecturer, asked, "You have spoken of duty to man, what have you to say of duty to God?" It was open of course to Holyoake to refuse to answer a question which was not relevant to the subject of the lecture, especially as the animus underlying it was evident. But with characteristic fearlessness he refused to evade the issue, and replied—"I am of no religion at all. I do not believe in such a thing as a God. The people of this country are too poor to have any religion. I would serve the Deity, as the Government serves the subalterns—place him on half-pay."

A prosecution for blasphemy followed in this case also, and on August 15, 1842, Mr. Holyoake received a sentence of six months' imprisonment.²

The *New Moral World* appears to have observed a

¹ *New Moral World*, Dec. 25, 1841.

² *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, by G. J. Holyoake, Vol. I., pp. 141 seqq. See also *The Trial of G. J. Holyoake for Blasphemy*, from notes specially taken by Mr. Hunt. London, 1842.

prudent attitude in the face of these proceedings. In commenting on the prosecution of Southwell the editor writes :

“One sees much to regret and condemn in the conduct of both parties. We are no admirers of the spirit which prompts to violent attacks upon the opinions or prejudices of our fellow beings, for we know that they cannot avoid having these impressed upon their minds by the training they receive.”¹

But the pages of the *New Moral World* had not always been free from offence in this respect ; nor indeed, as already said, had Owen always been true to his own principles. Moreover, whether from mere wantonness or from lack of due consideration, many offensive, blasphemous and injurious things had been uttered by the Social Missionaries and other exponents of Socialism. Further, the Socialists, in the persons of Holyoake, Southwell and others, were closely associated with the Free-thought movement generally ; Socialist and Freethought publications were issued by the same firms, and lay side by side on the same counters. And when these publishers were prosecuted for the issue of some offensive attacks on religion, as was the case with Heywood, Cleave and Hetherington for the sale of *Haslam's Letters*, it was natural and not altogether unjust that part of the odium of the proceedings should attach also to the Socialist cause.² The persecution to which the Socialists were subjected for some years at the hands of the clerical party was not therefore without some justification. It was not difficult for an intolerant and unimaginative

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 191.

² See *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1284, and Vol. X., p. 21.

Christian to suppose that Socialism aimed at subverting alike social order, morality and religion ; that its creed was mere blasphemy ; and its motive forces greed and lust.

But even at that time the Church was not fairly represented by such champions as Bishop Philpotts in Parliament and Brindley in the country. And nowadays assuredly the nobler spirits within the Church would have recognised that the Socialists stood for freedom of action, speech and thought, and because of the essential righteousness of the cause for which they fought, would have been ready to forgive them much random insolence and extravagance. And the champions of freedom in their turn would have learnt that the Church at its truest represented something more than superstition and priestly intolerance.

CHAPTER XXII

QUEENWOOD

ON Tuesday, October 1, 1839, the Society entered upon possession of a property of 533 acres at East Tytherly in Hampshire, about six miles from Stockbridge. The principal farm, which gave its name to the estate, was called Queenwood. The rent was £350 with a premium of £750, and the lease was to run for ninety-nine years.¹ The landowner was Sir Isaac L. Goldsmid. The following is a description of the estate given by Fleming, who paid a visit there in November of the same year, 1839.

“Our first visit was to the extra-parochial land (*i.e.* to the farm called Buckholt) upon which the Community Buildings are to be erected. They lie to the west of the farm-house, with a gentle declivity; the old Roman road from Sarum to Winchester passes through this portion of the estate. The spot selected as the site of the buildings has a beautiful exposure to the south; a fine grove of trees being situated at no great distance in front, and forming the foreground to a small richly wooded valley which opens beyond. The road to this will pass through a portion of the avenue formerly spoken of, after which it will wind through an open

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1219 *bis*.

lawn or park, till it comes on a line with the Roman road. The buildings will be well sheltered from the north by the rising ground behind ; on the east they will be shut in by the avenue ; and on the west the scene stretches away among a succession of wooded valleys, till it rises into some hills of considerable altitude. Altogether, the selection seems a most felicitous one.

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“ We again entered the avenue, and after proceeding southward along it for some time, we made a slight turn to the left, and were suddenly brought in view of a scene which far eclipsed all we had hitherto witnessed. It was a natural alley of yew-trees—the straight and polished stems of which shoot up to a considerable height, and then throw their branches across the road in such a manner as to form a close resemblance to the aisle of a Cathedral. It is scarcely possible to convey in words a correct idea of that beautiful walk ; the perspective effect is most striking. . . . Many aged and picturesque Yews are scattered over the surface of the estate, and will afford, under their ample shade, the most favourable opportunities for erecting seats and other conveniences either for study or recreation.”¹

Owen had been nominated by the previous Congress to act as Governor of the Community, but in a letter dated September 27, 1839, he resigns that office :

“ . . . It appeared evident to me that the branches

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., pp. 921, 922.

and the more influential members of them are not yet prepared either with funds or experience for more than a preliminary Working Community adapted to the views and habits of the better conditioned of the working classes, and that the members of the various branches are too impatient to wait for the necessary accumulation of funds to commence a Community, according to my ideas of a Community calculated for the general population of a country. Under these circumstances I deem it necessary to decline acting as Governor of this preliminary Working Community, but being most desirous to see the condition of the working classes improved, and this preliminary attempt to succeed, I recommend that John Finch of Liverpool, Charles Frederick Green of London, and Heaton Aldam of Whalley, Derbyshire, be appointed by the Central Board to direct and manage the proposed Working Community under the general superintendence of the Board—promising at the same time to give these individuals, if they should be so appointed, such aid and advice as may be in my power when they require it.”

On this recommendation Finch was appointed Acting Governor and Aldam director of agricultural operations. The necessary capital to start the enterprise was found by the Society, partly from its accumulated funds, but chiefly, it would appear, in the form of subscriptions from the various branches ; each branch which subscribed £50 being entitled to nominate one of its members to join the new Community. In addition to this, donations of various useful articles poured in from the branches and from private individuals. Month after month the *New*

Moral World prints a long list of many hundreds of articles presented to the Society—the presents being of the most multifarious kind, including, for instance, seventeen pairs of razors, a handbook of mathematics, a complete set of harness, a French grammar, *Horace, a Poem*, pocket-knives, a patent corkscrew, and implements innumerable for the stables, the farm, the shambles, the kitchen and the dining-room. Nothing, probably, could better illustrate the widespread interest and enthusiasm excited by the new venture than the unstinted flow of presents—many of them tools of a costly kind, the gifts of operatives who could not afford to testify their sympathy by any other means.

Mr. Aldam took the conduct of the venture at the outset, and the members entered upon their new domain as soon as formal possession was granted. Of the first members we learn from a letter of Mr. Aldam's.¹ He writes that there are few or no agricultural labourers amongst them, but he "does not consider it any drawback that we have not members who have been accustomed to farming work, for agricultural labourers in general are a localised, prejudiced, and stupid set of men . . . the present members having little knowledge of farming will of course be more ductile and easily formed into one grand body of co-operators." Mr. Aldam, as we are assured, was a practical and highly successful farmer.

In a few weeks, however, we find the Society appealing to the branches to send eighteen experienced men to Queenwood—three ploughmen, three hedgers

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 775.

and ditchers, carpenters and smiths—from which it may be inferred that freedom from prejudice was not in all cases found to compensate for lack of experience.¹

For the next few months we have very encouraging accounts from the Community at Queenwood. "Our days," Mr. Aldam writes, "are spent in united industry, our evenings in mutual improvement. . . . Our simple meals have the relish of good appetites and the charm of social conversation, and a generous strife pervades us as to who shall most promote the general happiness, and be most obliging and useful. Who that could see us early in the morning, washed and shaved, seated at our books reading or writing, then taking our wholesome meal of the nutritious products of the dairy; waiting after this till the grey mists of morning are dispelled to commence our united labours for the advancement of our delightful Colony—who could see all this, and say that we lived in a sty." ² Some of the more enthusiastic residents even adopted a new chronology, dating from October 1, the day on which the Socialists entered into possession of the land. Thus a disciple writes to Owen from Broughton on "23rd, 5th month, year 1, N.M.W." (February 23, 1840).³

The *New Moral World* for February 22, 1840, gives the following time-table for the week, which explains Aldam's allusion to the early morning study.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 830.

² *Ibid.*, p. 943. The "sty" is an allusion to a newspaper diatribe quoted a little lower down.

³ Manchester Collection. The new chronology would not seem to have been widely adopted.

Mathematical Class . . .	5.0—6.30 a.m. daily.
Tea and Public Business . .	5.0—6.30 p.m. daily.
Monday 6.30—8. p.m.	Dancing Class.
Tuesday 6.30—8. p.m.	Drawing Class.
„ 8.0 —9. p.m.	Grammar.
Wednesday 6.30—8. p.m.	Agriculture and Botany.
„ 8.0 —9. p.m.	Dancing.
Thursday 6.30—8. p.m.	Instrumental Music.
Friday 6.30—8. p.m.	Geography.
„ 8.0 —9. p.m.	Elocution.
Saturday 6.30—8. p.m.	Vocal Music.

The time-table, it will be seen, does not include Sunday. No work was done on that day; but the members met in the new dining-hall “to hear the Gospel of peace and universal fraternity expounded.” The hall was thronged by an attentive audience, many of whom had come from a considerable distance to hear what the Socialists had to say for themselves. These proceedings, and the parody of a religious service as described by the Bishop of Exeter in his second speech in the House of Lords, naturally did not endear the Socialists to the neighbouring clergy. The new enterprise excited the bitter animosity of the Church and the Tories. The Bishop of Ripon preached against it, and the Bishop of Exeter spoke in Parliament against it. The neighbouring clergy got up petitions and wrote tracts against it. An organ of the party of law and order heralded its advent with the following sinister suggestion :

“We see it announced that the Socialists are about to establish an Epicurean sty, on a large scale, in Hampshire. We trust that popular indignation will

protect that fair corner of this Christian isle from so hideous a pollution."

But opposition from without was less serious than dissensions within. The members were content at the outset with the old farm buildings which they found on the spot, supplemented by a large new building which they erected themselves in the first few months, with a capacious dining-hall, which served also as a lecture room, below, and sleeping-rooms above. The dining-hall was enriched with stained-glass windows, and decorated inside with paintings and engravings.

But the original members had to endure considerable discomfort from inadequate house accommodation. Moreover, as indicated in the letter above quoted, they had been selected for quite other reasons than their fitness for agricultural pursuits. Most of them appear to have come from the northern manufacturing towns, having been delegated by the branches who contributed most largely to the funds, and were probably quite unused to life in the country and somewhat dismayed at the hardships involved, especially in the winter months. After the first brief period of enthusiasm and glowing fraternity, discontent broke out into something like open rebellion. Letters from Aldam, Fleming and others to the *New Moral World* in 1840 speak of enthusiasm having cooled, of deterioration of mental and moral health.¹ It was clear that there was a good deal of unpleasantness. There had been a plentiful lack of foresight at the outset; too many people had been allowed to come, and the accommodation was clearly insufficient. Moreover, by an unlucky chance, Finch, the Deputy

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., pp. 24, 27, 136, etc.

Governor appointed in place of Owen, could not attend to his duties owing to ill health, and finally was forced to resign his position. At the meeting of Congress in May 1840, C. F. Green was elected in his stead.¹ A few months later Green found his position so difficult that he in turn resigned, and Rigby was, in October, 1840, installed as Governor in his place. For similar reasons Heaton Aldam, the first agricultural superintendent, had resigned his post in May, 1840, because of marked differences of opinion between him and the residents, and unfortunately the man deputed by Congress to take his place died in the course of the year.

The dissensions had become so acute in the middle of 1840 that C. F. Green, the then Governor, was instructed to take steps to reduce the membership. There were at the time fifty-seven residents at the colony—men, women and children. Some appear to have left of their own accord, others under the persuasion of the new Governor, and by the end of the summer the numbers were reduced to nineteen—eight men, four women and seven children of ten years old and under.² So matters appear to have continued until the spring of the following year. The twelve adult members worked in the dairy, the kitchen, and on the farm, their labours in the last-named region being supplemented by the services of some fifteen to twenty hired labourers. From the autumn of 1840 onward a schedule was published in each issue of the *New Moral World* showing week by week the occupation of each member of the Community and of the hired labourers. A hastily prepared and

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IX., p. 318.

preposterously sanguine balance sheet had been presented to the Congress of 1840, showing surplus assets of over £300. In the balance sheet made up six months later, this favourable balance had increased to £477. But in presenting the third balance sheet, for the period ending April 18, 1841, the auditors had to explain that this surplus had existed only on paper ; that its appearance was due mainly to two causes, an incorrect method of valuation, and the omission, through oversight, of a considerable number of debts. The audit now reveals a not inconsiderable deficit. The accounts are as follows :—

Balance Sheet of the Queenwood Community, April 18, 1841.

<i>Dr.</i>	£	s.	d.	<i>Cr.</i>	£	s.	d.
To capital advanced by Central Board to date	6,141	15	4	Cash in hand . . .	120	9	5½
Less money repaid to Members leaving . .	60	0	0	Sundry debtors . .	49	7	11
	6,081	15	4	Farming stock, crops, stores, furniture, etc.	2,876	1	5
To sundry creditors .	498	14	9	Amount paid to fine down rent and for growing timber . .	1,000	0	0
				Total assets . . .	4,045	18	9½
				Increased value of farm (at ordinary rate of estimating manure and labour expended), say £100 a year. . . .	2,000	0	0
				Balance	533	8	8½
	<u>£6,580</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>		<u>£6,580</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6½</u>

It will be seen that the auditors estimate that the assets fall short of the liabilities by £533.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 363. I quote the figures actually given in the *New Moral World*, but it is evident that some slight mistake has been made in the credit column.

But the Congress appointed a committee to comment on the auditors' report. And the committee put the facts in a more favourable light:—"There then remains £2,533 18s. 9d. which had been expended on the improvement of the farm, and has increased the value of the lease probably to the whole amount of this last sum . . . the assets also are evidently more than the £3,045 above stated."

The auditors, after careful examination of the kitchen accounts for the previous six months, found that the actual cost of maintenance of each adult person, exclusive of rent, was 7s. 1d. a week, made up as follows :

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Food	4	7
Fuel, candles and washing		11
Clothing		7
Pocket money	1	0
	<hr/>	
	7	1
	<hr/>	

The committee expanded the table as follows :

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Tea and coffee	4	
Sugar	7	$\frac{1}{2}$
Butter	7	$\frac{1}{2}$
Bread	1	$4\frac{1}{2}$
Flesh meat	1	3
Clothing		7
Fuel, candles, soap	1	$3\frac{1}{2}$
Pocket money	1	0
	<hr/>	
	7	1
	<hr/>	

The amounts, it will be seen, agree in the sum, but $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ has, without reason given, been taken off the cost of food and put on to that of fuel, candles and soap.

The committee press for greater economy in the use of tea, coffee, sugar, flesh meat and butter, and recommend that the residents should as far as possible content themselves with the food actually produced from the farm.

Our confidence in the report of the committee, already to some extent shaken by the manipulation of the auditors' figures, is still further impaired by what follows. They furnish a statement of the estimated revenue and expenditure on the farm during the coming year, which includes an item of £350 for hired labour. Even after allowing interest on the £6,000 advanced at the absurdly low rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the statement shows an estimated deficit on the year of £316. The comment on this financial statement is as follows:

"It is quite evident that the farm establishment has not been, and cannot at present be made, self-supporting. Some branches of industry must be added, a school must be opened, some boarders must be taken, or other means adopted, before the establishment can be made profitable to the Society; and these objects cannot be attained without a further outlay is made for buildings and capital required for carrying on these operations. *We find also that the expense of employing hired labourers is greater than the charge of supporting our own members, even at the low wages given in Hampshire, averaging not more than eight shillings per week; but this cannot be*

remedied until we have more buildings erected for the accommodation of our members.”¹

The hired labourers' wages are 8s. a week; the adult member of the Community costs, including pocket money, only 7s. 1d.—there is therefore a clear saving of 11d. a week for each member employed in lieu of an outside labourer.

Such is the Socialist reasoning; and that such a piece of arithmetic should have been put forward and accepted as sound finance goes far to explain the disaster of Queenwood, and indeed of all other Socialist schemes of the period. For it is scarcely necessary to point out that the labourer, out of his 8s. a week, fed, clothed and housed himself, a wife and children; and the prospective gain of 11d. could only therefore be realised if all the Community labourers were bachelors, and content to live *al fresco*. But celibacy or obedience to the precepts of Malthus did not, as we have seen, enter into the Socialist rules of life; and how far 11d. a week would go towards covering the omitted item of house rent may be guessed from the fact that the buildings ultimately erected at Tytherly cost £15,000, and that further large sums were spent in laying out the grounds and providing water, drainage, etc.

However, with a probable deficit on the year's working of the farm of some £300, all were agreed that other measures must be found to redress the balance. The question of a school, often previously discussed, was again raised: it was also suggested that boarders should be taken. A committee had been appointed in the

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 363.

previous year to recommend what trades should be started in the colony. Finally, Robert Owen, having announced his willingness to reside at Queenwood and take an active part in the management, was again elected Governor with practically unlimited powers, and also sole editor of the *New Moral World*. W. Galpin and H. Travis were elected respectively Vice-President and General Secretary.

To explain the choice of the Congress it should be stated that in the previous year, 1840, Robert Owen, William Galpin, F. Bate and others had formed a Society entitled "The Home Colonisation Society," with the object of providing funds for the Community experiment without too severely trenching upon the finances of the Central Board. The funds so accumulated were in large part contributed by Bate, William Galpin, and a few other wealthy sympathisers, and were lent to the Central Board on the most generous terms; their disposal was now by the vote of Congress placed almost absolutely at the discretion of the President and Governor. Owen at once commenced to use the powers entrusted to him. Hansom, architect of the Birmingham Town Hall, the young architect who seven years before had taken an active interest in the building strike in that town, was commissioned to erect buildings for the residents and for the proposed school on the most magnificent scale. The building, which was practically completed by the summer of 1842, was a stately structure, three stories high, and not unworthy of the beautiful site on which it was placed. Inside, as Mr. Holyoake tells us, it was finished with the most scrupulous care and thoroughness : " The laths which formed the partitions



By permission of the Charity Organisation Society, from a prospectus of Queenwood College.

HARMONY HALL, AFTERWARDS QUEENWOOD COLLEGE.

were of the best quality, and the nails used in the obscurest parts of the building were the best that could be had. There was nothing hidden that was mean and nothing exposed that was shabby. It is one of the pleasant recollections of the place that its directors endeavoured to make it honest throughout. Seven or eight hundred pounds were spent in making roads and promenades—handsome, spacious and enduring. The old Romans would have respected them. Even the kitchen and the basement rooms, used by members for evening meetings, were wainscoted with mahogany many feet high. Comfort and grace were consulted, as far as means permitted, in everything.”¹ It should be added that on the outside of the building were carved the letters “C. M.,” signifying “Commencement of the Millennium.”²

Owen further entered into negotiations for the lease or purchase of three adjoining farms—Great and Little Bentley and Rose Hill—thus increasing the Society’s holding to upwards of 1,000 acres.

In November, 1841, some of the residents, a little disturbed at the lavish expenditure, called in an outsider, J. R. Mann, a land agent from Norwich, to advise upon the general state of the farms and the prospects of the enterprise. Mann’s report—published as a supplement to the *New Moral World* of December 25, 1841—was entirely favourable. Upon the data thus obtained the committee drew up a balance sheet showing a prospective profit of £910 a year from the farming operations,

¹ *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 301.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 519. *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 305.

and a further £750 profit from the establishment of a school with 200 scholars at £25 a year.

At the Annual Congress held in May, 1842, the prospect seemed hopeful. The Finance Committee reported that £18,963 had been expended on the property; and though they were unable to get a complete statement of accounts showing how the amount had been expended, a valuation which had been laid before them—the reference is no doubt to Mann's statement—showed that the property was of much greater value than the above figures represented. However, the General Fund of the Society and the publishing account of the *New Moral World* both showed a deficit; and the General Executive were empowered to consider the question of curtailing the amount spent on engaging Missionaries. In the event it was found necessary to discharge the whole of the paid Missionaries.¹

The Congress appears to have separated in a hopeful frame of mind. Two months later, however, in July, 1842, a special meeting of Congress was summoned by the Central Board to consider the state of the Tytherly finances. It appeared, to quote the Finance Committee's report, that "the Governor of Harmony had been proceeding with practical operations faster than the means of the Society would warrant, in consequence of which a considerable sum was now wanted to discharge present liabilities, to complete the new buildings and the furnishing of the same, and for the purchase of stock, &c., to improve the farm."²

In fact, as appeared from the statement of William

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., pp. 385-8.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XI., p. 41.

Galpin, Owen had been given an absolutely free hand by those associated with him in the management of the funds, on the understanding that he should pay ready money, and should not incur any debts unless there were at hand the means to discharge them. Relying upon promises of pecuniary support which were never fulfilled, Owen had, it now appeared, committed the Society to a most embarrassing extent. There were pressing liabilities of upwards of £2,000, and urgent need for at least £3,000 more to complete what had already been begun. In the emergency, William Galpin, Bate and the other members of the Home Colonisation Society professed their readiness not only to waive any claim for the repayment of their loans at the present time, but to wait for payment of the interest until the Central Board should decide that the state of the funds would admit of its being paid.

Owen in a long speech justified his procedure, but resigned his post as Governor of the colony and editor of the *New Moral World*. He further stated that he would hold himself liable for the debts incurred until they should be discharged.

The Congress in reply unanimously voted a resolution exonerating Owen and the committee from blame :—

“That in the opinion of the Congress the present financial condition of the establishment in Hampshire has mainly arisen from the too great confidence of the Governor in the disposition of capitalists not immediately connected with the Society to advance capital for its purposes—which confidence induced him to press forward practical operations at a rate which exceeded the actual income and available funds of the Society. And the

Congress further consider that this result has been aided by the implicit and unbounded faith reposed in the late Governor by the principal Officers of the Society, which prevented them from exercising that judicious and prudent control over the expenditure of the funds which their uniform business-like and satisfactory conduct in other respects shows that under other circumstances, and but for such confidence, they would have felt it to be their duty to exercise."

The resolution went on to exonerate all concerned from "any intentional error," and to express the conviction of the Congress that the temporary difficulties would be soon removed by united and energetic effort.¹ Finally John Finch was re-elected Governor; and the Congress in a special report, after dwelling upon the fact that nearly £30,000 had already been expended on the Community, urged the members by all means in their power to aid in procuring the £5,000 more which alone was needed to bring the experiment to a happy issue.

At this time (August, 1842) advertisements began to appear in the *New Moral World* of the Boarding House and Educational Establishment at Harmony Hall, Hants. The terms for the school, the arrangements for which were nearly completed, were fixed at £25 a year, including clothing. The *Morning Chronicle* of December 13, 1842, contains a long letter from an agricultural expert signing himself "One who has Whistled at the Plough,"² containing an account of

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., p. 53.

² He was, as we learn from Lloyd Jones (*Life of Robert Owen*, p. 404), one Alexander Somerville, an agent of the Anti-Corn Law

a visit to Harmony Hall, as it was now known. After relating that he received from the neighbours a good report of the Socialist manners and morals, he proceeds :

“When we reached the turnip field, I remarked to my friend that, if these were ‘Socialist turnips,’ they promised well. They were Socialist turnips, and we soon after found seven hundred Socialist sheep, which made my friend exclaim, ‘Lord bless me ! who would have thought it?’

“Winding down a gentle declivity, we saw a red three-storied brick building, near some large forest trees. These trees seemed the commencement of a wooded district which contrasted pleasantly with the naked country we had travelled over from Salisbury. As we approached the red brick house we could observe that its outward form was tasteful, and all its proportions substantial. It stood about fifty yards to our right, while on the left was a farmyard, old and uncomfortable-looking, with some ricks of wheat, waggons, pigs and cattle. Adjoining the farmyard was a new house, which might have been taken at first view for the respectable residence of a substantial farmer. This we found was built as a temporary residence for those members who arrived previous to the large house being built.”

They then entered the large building, Harmony Hall, and were shown over the premises by Atkinson, the secretary.

“We descended to the basement floor, which, on

League. His letters to the *Chronicle* were reprinted by the Socialists as a pamphlet under the heading “A Journey to Harmony Hall.” It is from this pamphlet that the quotations in the text are taken.

the other side of the house, looked out on a level with a lawn partly in process of formation. On this floor there were several large apartments ; one of them a dining-room. Dinner was just over, and as a finale to it, the members were singing in full chorus a beautiful piece of solemn music. We were not asked to go into their presence, but we went to the kitchen after examining an excellent piece of machinery, which through a tunnel, conveyed the dishes and the dinner from the kitchen to the door of the dining-hall. A boy who was passing, showed us how it worked, and presently several other boys appeared. All of them were so clean and neat in their clothes, so healthy in their appearance, and at the same time so respectful in their manners to us and to each other, that I could not help staying behind to talk with and look at them.

“In the kitchen there were three or four women with a very large assortment of dishes to wash. I do not know what the dinner had been, but judging from the refuse of bits and scraps, which seemed to me to tell more of abundance than economy, I supposed they had all got enough of it. The women in the kitchen were like all the others, tidy and respectable in appearance. The only thing that puzzled me was how they should be so well as they were, with such prodigious piles of plates, washed and unwashed, around them. I can say nothing adequately descriptive of the fittings of this kitchen. At Broughton I was told that the London architect—who superintended the erection of the whole—said that there were very few kitchens so completely and expensively fitted up as it in London.

am sorry to say that such is to all appearance, and by all accounts, the case.

“Outside the kitchen there were commodious wash-houses, cellarage, baths, and a well-arranged place for each member to wash himself as he comes from his work before going to meals.

“Ascending again to the next floor we entered a ball-room, and going upstairs we saw the sleeping rooms, all as conveniently arranged as can be under one roof. Upon the whole the house is commodious, but I was much disappointed at seeing such a house. A village of cottages, each with a garden, would surely have been more appropriate for a working community, and much cheaper; the sum expended on this building, not yet half furnished, is said to exceed £30,000.¹ Such extravagance, previous to cultivating the land, would stagger most people on the question of the sagacity of the working bees.

“Mr. Atkinson conducted us to the new garden, which contains twenty-seven acres. I was then introduced to a Mr. Scott, the chief gardener, whom I found to be an intelligent and thoroughly practical man. His operations of trenching and planting, and indeed gardening in every department, were extensive. Brick-makers were making bricks; builders were building; lime-burners were burning lime; road-makers were making roads; the shepherds were with the sheep; nine ploughs were at work; a hundred acres of wheat were already sown, and more wheat land was being prepared. A reservoir was being constructed to save all the liquid manure; and in short, everything was being done to

¹ The actual sum, as already said, was just £15,000.

improve the land which industry and capital could accomplish, and skill direct.

“Mr. Scott was having portions of some of the fields trenched with the spade. He paid the labourers £5 per acre for it, and expected them to work so as to make two shillings a day. I remarked that this was more wages than common. He said it was ; they only gave the ploughmen and other day labourers nine shillings a week ; but as it was scarcely possible to get a good workman in that part of the country, he allowed a higher rate of wages to get them to work with some spirit. In answer to a remark I made about proselytising their workmen to Socialism, he replied that they never made any attempt ; but if they did attempt it, he believed anything might be accomplished, any change might be effected, but a change in the old slovenly style of working ; on that point he believed the present generation of Hampshire labourers to be incurable. . . .

“There is some fine wood on the ground, and an avenue of fine old yews, which, for beauty and extent is perhaps not equalled in any other part of England. The community intend converting a portion of that avenue into a summer ball-room. Adjoining, are large numbers of full-grown trees, resembling the shape and size of the main-mast of a man-of-war.”

In a second letter, dated December 23, the writer adds :

“The Bishop of Exeter exposed [the Socialists] in his own peculiar way ; and many newspapers have represented them as defunct ; but they are still in existence, and growing in importance every day. The people in the neighbourhood dreaded them when they

THE FOUNDER
AND
OF SOCIALISM.



ROBERT OWEN.

THE PATRON



THE BISHOP OF EXETER.

From a contemporary lithograph published at Manchester, reproduced by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

came at first, but now they respect them. They are bringing from all parts of the kingdom the best improved implements and methods of working ; the scattered facts of well-authenticated experiments they are collecting from all the improved agricultural districts, and introducing them to a part of the kingdom eminently defective, and, in those respects, neglected. Amid a poor population they are creating and enjoying wealth ; amid an ignorant population they are dispensing education ; amid an imperfectly employed population they are spreading employment ; amid a population not remarkable for correct moral conduct, they are showing themselves as an example which compels the respect of all who know them, and who at first distrusted them. If their principles be as dangerous to society as has been often said, what is to be done to counteract them ? The anathema of the Bishop neither sinks their thousand acres in the sea, nor sets a blight upon their crops."

As a pendant to this description from an outsider we may quote from the letter of "A Twelve-Years Socialist," who paid a visit to Harmony Hall in December of the same year, 1842. On his first sight of the house he cries, "Behold the promised land ! One's breath is stopped for a moment ; but life hurries on, else would we stop a century, here on this spot, to contemplate the grand ideal of human existence therein embodied, or partially developed. Mind of Owen ! we recognise your benignant presence." After describing the house, the dancing and general festivities, he gives us a glimpse of breakfast before the dawn. He enters the refectory : "Breakfast is laid ; for some minutes I have heard a whirr, as of machinery—it whirrs again—the kitchen

railway ! A train has just arrived at the mouth of the dark tunnel, bringing coffee urns and buttered bread. . . . 'What, coffee without cream in a farmhouse ? Not even milk ?' 'No ; we are short of cows.' Well, let us be patient, Rome was not built in a day. The bread is excellent, the talk friendly. No one seems to think of what there is not ; we are decidedly materialists."

Of dinner he writes :

"The railway is again in requisition ; puddings and dainty vegetables form the bulk of the supply ; meat seems not much in estimation. I take apple-pudding—nothing can be finer ; afterwards some cauliflower with sauce, a turnip nicely prepared, or potato moulded into tempting shapes, and home-baked bread, more satisfying than beef. Yes, such a choice of dishes settles at once the question of a meat diet."¹

The Socialists, however unwisely they may have spent their money, did not waste it in riotous living. Throughout the experiment a large proportion of the inmates appear to have been vegetarians ; and in the last stage, when strict economy was the order, tea and coffee were cut off as well as milk and meat.

The new buildings, as will be seen from the accounts quoted, were pushed forward rapidly, and at the Congress of May, 1843, the Central Board were able to announce that the schools were already in working order, and to invite the members of Congress to inspect the classes. There were sixty-one pupils, of whom thirty-five were paying fees, the remainder being children of the residents of the colony. Moreover, the Rose Hill Boarding House was open, under the management of

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., p. 229.

the secretary, James Atkinson. There were at the time forty-three adult members in residence—viz. thirty men and thirteen women. Upwards of eight hundred acres were under cultivation. But the only trades in operation were those of blacksmith, carpenter, bricklayer, etc., and the work of the operatives was entirely absorbed by the needs of the Community itself. From the balance sheet it appeared that £11,667 3s. 0d. had been remitted in cash to Harmony during the year ended March 31, 1843, and that £214 13s. 5d. had been received from thence. The committee were of opinion that £8,000 more were required for the completion of the existing buildings and the erection of a dairy, a new farmstead, another boarding-house, and the equipment of workshops and a printing establishment. If this money could be raised, the number of residents increased to two hundred and sixty or three hundred, and hired labour dispensed with as soon as practicable, the experiment ought soon to be in a flourishing condition. Owen further urged, as means to this desirable end, the taking of Great Bentley Farm, which could, he was satisfied, be worked more cheaply by the Society than by any outsider; and the equipping of an industrial school for a thousand children at £12 or £13 a head.¹

There were some complaints from the residents that they were not given a share in the government of the colony; there was some murmuring also at recent measures of economy. It appeared that the supply of cheese at supper had been discontinued, so that the meal now consisted of bread and water only. Also the Sunday's dinner, in order to save labour for the

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., pp. 360, 415, 416, 436.

women, consisted simply of coffee and bread and butter. But on the whole goodwill and hopefulness marked the proceedings.

In the early summer of 1843 Finch went to America and Owen resumed the post of Governor of Harmony. About the same time W. Galpin, who had been appointed General Secretary at the preceding Congress and had ultimately become Vice-President, resigned his position.¹

The year 1843 was marked by the issue of a prospectus, signed by Owen as President, and by the Central Board, inviting the public to subscribe, not £8,000, the amount estimated at the last Congress required to complete the equipment of the enterprise but £25,000. In this was included a sum of £7,500 for building and furnishing an Industrial School for five hundred children, in addition to more furniture, etc. for the school already in existence. Up to this date—August, 1843—as explained in the prospectus, £30,000 had already been expended upon Harmony, made up as follows:—

	£
Subscriptions to the Community Fund, represented by non-convertible script . . .	4,477
Ordinary loans bearing interest at the rate of £400 yearly	9,112
Loans of Home Colonisation Society, on which no interest was payable until all other engagements were met . . .	12,967
Donations and unclaimed money. . .	3,500
	<hr/>
	£30,056 ²
	<hr/>

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

It was estimated that after paying interest at the rate of 5 per cent. on £28,000 of the old capital, and on £25,000 now to be raised—£2,650 a year in all—there would remain a clear profit of £1,200 a year, to be applied to the purposes of the Society.

In the event, about £1,900 was actually subscribed in response to the prospectus.¹ The only fresh undertaking of importance, therefore, actually carried through during the year 1843-4 was the taking of Great Bentley Farm on a lease for ninety-nine years from Michaelmas, 1843.

There were in May, 1844, ninety-four children in the schools, of whom sixty-four were paying fees. The school course included, besides the usual routine, geography, astronomy, history ancient and modern, chemistry, anatomy and physiology, drawing, painting in oils, vocal and instrumental music, geometry, land surveying, French and German. The fees remained at £25 a year, including clothes, and it was not thought at present advisable to reduce them.²

Such was the state of affairs when the Congress met on May 10, 1844, at Harmony Hall. There had been for some time indications that the Provincial Branches were no longer in complete harmony with the Central Board. The erection, in the larger towns, of Halls of Science had absorbed most of the spare money of the members, and subscriptions had come in more slowly than before. There had been some friction and misunderstanding about the arrangements for the residents; there had been in the course of the five

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 378.

² *Ibid.*, p. 390.

years two or three processes of purgation, and the members who had left, of their own accord or under strong processes of suasion, had no doubt helped to increase the dissatisfaction. The funds at the disposal of the Central Board, too, had for some time been almost wholly diverted to the upkeep of the Queenwood experiment. At the Congress of 1842, in view of the state of the general funds, it had been found necessary, as already said, to discharge all the Missionaries, and the spread of the Society's work was therefore left for a time entirely to volunteers or to local enterprise.¹

At the Congress of the following year, 1843, great dissatisfaction had been expressed at this arrangement; it was represented that there was urgent need of Missionaries to continue the propaganda, and that the interests of the branches were being wholly sacrificed to the advancement of the Hampshire experiment. In the event Messrs. Lloyd Jones and Joseph Smith were appointed Missionaries for the ensuing year.² But the discontent with the policy of Congress was kept alive. Probably the election of Owen for a second term of office as Governor, and the extravagant promises held out in his prospectus issued in the preceding August, brought the uneasiness and dissatisfaction of the provincials to a climax. At any rate at the opening of the Congress of 1844 it was evident that a new spirit was abroad. It had at previous Congresses been the custom for Owen, as President and Founder of the Society, to take the chair. On this occasion he was absent at the first

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XL, p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 411, 425.

meeting, and Joseph Smith, the delegate for Oldham, moved that John Finch be elected Chairman of Congress. The motion was seconded by James Nockles, delegate for Glasgow. Fleming and Bate urged that it would be "a fatal departure from courtesy" not to elect Owen to the position. Smith, Nockles, and others replied that Owen would not be a suitable Chairman on the occasion : he was always intolerant of opposition and frequently showed much irritation at the expression of opinions differing from his own. On this account, and because of the respect and affection which they had for him, some persons would rather keep silence than express disagreement with Owen's views. Moreover, on this occasion Owen's own conduct of the Harmony enterprise would probably be called in question, and it would be painful for him as well as for them that he should preside over the discussion. Eventually the new men carried the day, Finch was elected Chairman, and Congress proceeded with its deliberations.¹ Towards the end of the sittings, on May 27, Owen—who had apparently up to this point absented himself from the meetings—came forward and announced that he could not consent to have his actions, whether as President of the Rational Society, or as Governor of Harmony, fettered by the resolutions passed by Congress—"He could not accept office in connection with the Society, unless he could have free authority to act as circumstances rendered it necessary, without reference to previous resolutions of Congress. If they desired his services it would be necessary for

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 377.

them to rescind the resolutions which they had passed.”¹

The position thus created was a painful one for all concerned. Apart from the respect and loyalty due to Owen as the founder and for so long the President of the Society, his name and character still stood for much with their own members and with the world outside; and it seemed certain that the Society would lose many supporters if Owen ceased, under such circumstances, to act as their head.

But the Congress felt that it was impossible to submit to a dictatorship of this kind, and Owen's resignation was unanimously accepted. Mr. David Vines, the Vice-President—then in London—was elected President in Owen's room. But Vines refused to take office in the circumstances. Eventually Mr. John Buxton, one of the delegates from Manchester, was elected President and Governor of Harmony, nine voting for him, and five, including Lloyd Jones, A. Campbell and F. Bate, against.

On the new President nominating the Board of Directors, G. A. Fleming declined to serve, and F. Bate resigned the position of Treasurer. The Board consisted therefore almost entirely of new and untried men. The resignation of Bate left it also to consist entirely of men who had but a very small pecuniary stake in the Society. The new Board had contributed between them to Community Funds less than £200; the old Board represented contributions of more than £13,000, of which Owen had contributed £737 and Bate £12,150.² It is a striking

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 402

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII., p. 340.

proof of the unworldliness of the Socialists and their mutual confidence that such an arrangement should have been possible. Nor, it should be added, was that confidence abused. The new men, who had captured the Congress and with it the government of Harmony, were perfectly honourable and straightforward in their dealings, besides being much better men of business than their predecessors.¹ And even from the standpoint of high finance their proceedings were not wholly indefensible. They probably represented the views of the great majority of the poorer members and small shareholders who had contributed in subscriptions and small loans nearly £9,000.² It is no disparagement of the generosity of Frederick Bate, who had given upwards of £12,000—all that he had—to point out that these contributions from working men and others represented in the aggregate a far larger sum of personal sacrifice for the common cause.

It was indeed no enviable task upon which the new management entered in May, 1844. The extravagant buildings were still incomplete in themselves, and incompletely furnished; the gardens and roads were unfinished; the farms had been starved—more horses and cows, more manure and more labour were needed; also more machinery and implements; the trades in the establishment could not be developed for want of the necessary capital. The balance sheet for the year ended March 31, 1844, showed a heavy loss on

¹ See Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 306—"Mr. John Buxton, the new Governor, was a man of honesty and courage." See also Lloyd Jones, *Life of Robert Owen* (edition of 1900), p. 412; Lloyd Jones himself took part in the proceedings of Congress as delegate for Bolton.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 376.

the working. Summarised, the chief items were as follows :

<i>Receipts.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
From the farm	...	£1,233	Farm	£2,537
From visitors	...	216	House, including, apparently,		
From school fees	...	1,098	food for school children	...	2,020

The total receipts had amounted in round figures to £2,800 and the total expenditure to £5,700—the balance of £2,900 being made up by money advanced by the parent Society.¹ The estimated balance sheet for the coming year, drawn up by the old management, was, as usual, of the rosiest complexion.

FOR YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 1845.

<i>Estimated Income.</i>				<i>Estimated Expenditure.</i>			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
School fees owing	...	200	0 0	Outstanding debts	...	1,955	2 6½
School fees for year	...	1,300	0 0	Rent, rates, tithes, etc.	...	1,167	13 6
Boarders and visitors	...	200	0 0	Food, light, etc., for			
Farm produce	...	2,923	0 0	house	...	2,000	0 0
Loans, donations, sub-				Loans repaid, and in-			
scriptions	...	3,500	0 0	terest	...	1,876	13 11½
				Cash balance for im-			
				provements	...	1,123	10 0
	£8,123	0 0			£8,123	0 0	

In presenting this estimate the old management report :
 “On looking at the yearly income of the establishment and the yearly expenditure of it, the prospect is very cheering, and if once the debts now due were cleared off, and a little cash in hand to meet liabilities, the experiment

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 404.

would be in a very proud position." In the expenditure of the establishment no account has been taken of the "sum paid for hired labour, which has hitherto been a large item, but which it is intended to reduce to a great extent."¹

If we briefly examine the estimate, we find on the side of *Income* that the committee estimate (1) that all the arrears of school fees will be paid, and all the fees for the next year paid in full, and (2) that the farm will produce considerably more than double the amount produced in the preceding year. On the *Expenditure* side they allow practically the same amount for house expenses as in the preceding year; they allow only £1,123 for manure, seed and all improvements on the farms; and they omit altogether the item of hired labour, which represented in the preceding year an expenditure of about £1,300. The explanation of this omission is that Congress had recommended that hired labour should as far as possible be replaced by the labour of their own members; and, as all the existing members were fully employed, that about one hundred fresh members should be introduced for the purpose. But no allowance, it is to be observed, is made in the estimates even for the food and living expenses of these additional members, much less for the considerable expenditure for furniture and fittings which would be entailed.

It was left for the sharp criticism of experience to point out the fallacies of the estimate. Here is an account of the actual expenditure for the year ended March 31, 1845.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 403.

FOR YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 1845.

<i>Income.</i>				<i>Expenditure.</i>			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Farm	2,462	15	11	Rent	1,124	0	0
Gardens	59	10	3	Labour on farm ...	750	0	0
House (visitors) ...	138	17	1	Manure, seed, etc., on			
School... ..	849	13	8	farm	866	10	0
Loans, trades, printing,				Gardens	83	13	5
etc.	206	1	3	House	2,295	7	4
Advanced by the				School	127	17	11
Rational Society ...	3,166	18	9	Buildings, loans,			
				printing office,			
				trades, etc....	977	17	10
				To the Rational Society	662	5	0
	<u>£6,883</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>11</u>		<u>£6,887</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>6 1</u>

On the side of revenue the farm and gardens have produced about £400 less than the estimate of a year ago. This was mainly due to the unfavourable season. The house has produced less because the visitors have fallen off, owing mainly to the stricter economy practised in the establishment. It was found necessary to lower the school fees, because the Socialist parents could not afford to pay £25 a year for their children, and even with the reduction the numbers seriously diminished. The ordinary revenue is therefore less by some £1,100.

On the other hand, the necessary expenses of farm, gardens, and school have swallowed up all the margin of £1,123 shown in the estimated balance sheet, and even so the farm has evidently been starved. There has been an expenditure on labour, not allowed for

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 342. In the original cast the sum total of the expenditure is shown as £6,878 11s. 8d. and there is a favourable balance of over £5. Probably some of the figures in the several items have been transposed.

in the estimate, of £750 on the farm : the expenditure on the house has exceeded the estimate by nearly £300. In fact, the excess in this last case is only apparent ; for of the total of £2,295 shown as spent on the house, £679 represents repayment of old debts ; the current house expenses for the year were less, therefore, than the estimate by nearly £400—a result no doubt due to the more rigid economy practised, as well as to diminished numbers of pupils and visitors. It appeared further that the debts had been underestimated by the old management ; they actually amounted at the beginning of the financial year 1844-5 to over £2,500, or about £600 more than the estimate.

It is clear that the enterprise is in a bad way. The Governor reported that a recent valuation showed the total liabilities—loans, shares and current debts—to amount to just under £40,000, and the property—buildings, machinery, crops and stock—to be worth less than £26,000, leaving a deficit of more than £14,000.¹ Moreover the revenue is decreasing ; the landlord is pressing for arrears of rent, and other creditors are becoming importunate. A Select Committee appointed by Congress to enquire further into the matter found that £10,000 was wanted to provide the additional buildings, stock, manure, etc., needed to put the farm into proper order, and unless this sum can be provided, and provided at once, they recommend the Society by some means to find tenants for the farm, or otherwise dispose of their interest."

At a Special Congress held at the John Street In-

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 399.

² *Ibid.*, p. 441.

stitution in July it was decided to take all available means to wind up the affairs of the Society. Of the trustees originally appointed—Messrs. Finch, Green and Clegg—the first-named, the only one of the three who had of recent years taken any active interest in the Harmony enterprise, was now absent in America. Moreover the deed appointing them as trustees had never been executed, and it seemed doubtful, therefore, whether these gentlemen had any legal standing. In this ambiguity the Congress resolved to appoint three assignees, of whose capacity and readiness to act they were assured, and in the event Buxton, Bate and Pare were chosen.¹

On July 11, three days before the meeting of the Special Congress which thus pronounced the doom of the Community, the residents at Harmony Hall were holding high festival. The usual monthly Family Tea Party and Ball had been deferred in order to give a welcome to Owen on his return from the United States. After tea was over, and the customary Social hymn had been sung, Owen gave an address, in which he dwelt upon the wonders of the new “electric magnetic telegraph.” He then publicly named two children belonging to the Community, and after joining in the Grand March and the first Country Dance retired to rest. By the rest of the company “the festive song and the airy dance” were kept up alternately until after midnight.² But this was probably the last Social festival at Harmony Hall. The assignees set about the business of winding up the Society’s affairs without delay. On August 20, 1845, the *New Moral World*, after an

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., pp. 465, 477.

² *Ibid.*, p. 459.

unsuccessful claim by G. A. Fleming, the late editor, to the title and goodwill of the paper, was purchased by one James Hill, who for some months ran it partly in the interests of the remnants of the Rational Society in London, partly in those of the National Land and Building Association. Ultimately the title appears to have been changed into that of the *Commonweal*.¹

The leases of Great and Little Bentley Farms were advertised in the *New Moral World* of August 6, and the latter farm, containing about two hundred acres arable and pasture, was at once taken over by Messrs. Galpin and Ironside, the delegate for Sheffield, who carried with them the majority of the remaining residents from the parent Community. Buxton, in his capacity of assignee, together with his wife and family remained in occupation of the deserted buildings until the following June, when the estate was finally disposed of. The other residents appear to have gradually melted away, and the enterprise may be said to have ended with the summer of 1845.

Of other Land Colonisation experiments of the period little need be said. Feargus O'Connor's National Land scheme, for forming small colonies of peasant proprietors throughout the country, though it no doubt owed something to Owen's teaching and example, was not a Socialist scheme at all, since it contemplated individual cultivation and individual ownership. Two or three other communistic schemes, however, were actually started at about the same time as the Queenwood experiment. In the beginning of 1840 the "Society of United Friends," a Liverpool organisation with John Moncas as President, took the lease of a farm in Wales, of some

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 540.

700 acres, and commenced work on it forthwith. The capital was to be provided by subscriptions from the members—£12 for each man and £8 for each woman. Children under eighteen were to be admitted free, their labour going to the Society, and aged parents of members were to pay £5 each. It is obvious that the proposed capital was quite insufficient, and the arrangements for the admission of the young and the old would have imposed an intolerable burden upon the Society. It further appeared that the land chosen for the experiment was quite unsuitable, consisting mostly of barren hillside, stony ravine or peat swamp. Forty acres of land were actually cultivated, "and even this small quantity is interspersed with rocks and large heaps of stones; and the greater part of it is so steep that the horses can scarcely draw the empty plough up."¹ The enterprise appears to have been soon abandoned.

Another experiment, the Manea Fen Colony, started with greater promise of success, and did in fact run for about two years. The experiment was a private speculation on the part of one William Hodson, who found the land and much of the capital and elected himself Governor of the Community for five years. Hodson attended the Congress of May, 1840, and delivered a lecture to the Rational Society on the proper way—his way—of founding a Community. He explained that during the previous year there had been an average of 20 individuals at Manea Fen, that they had built 24 small houses and some workshops, and had greatly improved the land. Further, they had set up a printing

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 84. See also Vol. VII., pp. 1161, 1215, 1210 (*bis*), 1248 (*bis*), 1282 (*bis*), etc.

press, and published their own paper, *The Working Bee*, which ran from July, 1839, to January, 1841. Hodson proposed that the Rational Society should join forces with him ; that Manea Fen should be mainly agricultural and Queenwood mainly an educational Community. The proposition was discussed at considerable length, but the wiser heads in the Rational Society distrusted both the man and his methods, and it was eventually decided to take no steps in the direction of co-operation for the present. In February of the following year, 1841, the experiment came to a disastrous end. Hodson forcibly took possession of the property, and turned the colonists out in the cold.¹

The reader who has followed with attention the history of the enterprise at Queenwood will hardly need to have the causes of the failure pointed out to him. At no time, to use an expressive Americanism, did the scheme begin to be practical. Owen, as we have seen, dissociated himself from the enterprise at the commencement on the ground mainly that the funds subscribed were not sufficient. But if the quarter of a million which Owen required had been forthcoming, it is practically certain that the catastrophe, if longer deferred, would have been even more complete. And for the actual disaster Owen himself was mainly responsible. His ideas were altogether on too large a scale ; as Ironside wrote in 1845 of Owen's governorship, "If the thing

¹ See *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 297 ; Vol. VII., pp. 1161, 1271 (*bis*) ; Vol. VIII., p. 374 ; Vol. IX., pp. 25, 115, 118. The article in Vol. V. (March 2, 1839), written at the outset of the experiment, solemnly warns Socialists against joining in the enterprise, and is evidently inspired by a distrust of Hodson personally.

See also Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., pp. 288-90.

had gone on a few years longer, Mr. Owen would have had all the estates between Queenwood and Southampton.”¹ Owen spent enormous sums on buildings which were never completed ; and added farm to farm when the money in hand was never sufficient to admit of even one farm being worked to profit. Throughout the experiment the Central Board pointed out year by year that the number of horses was insufficient to work the land ; that the cattle should be considerably increased in number ; that more money was needed for manure, for implements, for drainage, etc. In fact the deficit on the working of the farm in the most favourable year—1843—exceeded £1,100 ; and in the whole period from the commencement of the experiment in October, 1839, down to December, 1844, the total expenditure on the farms—exclusive of the heavy cost of the buildings—amounted to no less a sum than £14,918, whilst the gross revenue during the same period amounted to £4,924 only—a net deficit of £10,000 in a little over five years. If the farms had been debited with their proportionate share of the cost of the buildings in which were housed some of those who worked on the land, and of the cost of the roads and other conveniences, this deficit would have been much larger.²

In the same way the house, as we have seen, was built on the most lavish scale, and with all the latest sanitary improvements. So costly were the buildings, indeed, that Buxton and his colleagues calculated that

¹ Letter to Sir I. L. Goldsmid, *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 341.

² Full tables of the expenditure are printed in the *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 324.

in 1844, the last year of Owen's management, at a time when the school fees were £25 a year, and even that sum was only required from those who could afford to pay it, and as we have seen, was not always forthcoming, the net cost to the Society of each pupil boarded and educated in the schools was £29 1s. a year; and even in the following year, when the expenses had been greatly reduced—mainly by the summary process of dismissing the trained teachers, and employing members of the Community in their stead—the annual cost was £21 10s. 3d. a head, and the annual fees, when paid, appear to have been only £20.¹

There was never sufficient capital to work any of the trades, even that of printing, so as to afford a fair chance of yielding a profit. But if the capital had been forthcoming, there is no manner of doubt that the issue, at any rate under the earlier management, would have been the same. The principle which governed all the undertakings of the Society receives its most conspicuous illustration in the proposal made at each succeeding Congress to employ for the farm as far as possible their own residents instead of hired labourers—a proposal sincerely made and supported in the interests of economy. In other words, in a place where the skilled labourer housed, clothed and fed himself and a wife and family on 8s. a week, it was thought an economical measure to suggest paying the untrained labourer a guinea a week² and lodging him rent free in a palace.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 368.

² This sum represents the maintenance, given as 7s. 1d. each weekly, of a man and his wife; and of two children whose maintenance is reckoned as equivalent in cost to that of one adult. From some tables prepared by the last Board of Management it appears that the actual

But before we pass judgment on the whole enterprise of Harmony as a senseless or even criminal absurdity, it is necessary to endeavour to realise the mental attitude of those who conducted it and those who supported it. The working men of the period, as we have already seen, whether Chartists, Anti-Corn Law Leaguers, or Socialists, were convinced that a part of the gross product of their labour which was variously estimated at any proportion from three-fourths to nineteen-twentieths was somehow, whether by conscious fraud, or by the silent operation of an unjust social system, diverted from their pockets into those of the landlords, the master manufacturers and the idle rich generally. Owen had assured His Majesty King William IV. that the twenty-five millions of men inhabiting these islands could readily, with the aid of modern mechanical and chemical inventions, supply by their labour the needs of six hundred millions. In the ideal Community sketched out by Owen all the material wants of the Society were to be satisfied by the labour of the children and youth, who would find in that labour merely a pleasant relaxation from the more strenuous engagements of an encyclopædic education. One of Owen's latest converts, James Braby, had, as we have seen, calculated that a colony of five hundred persons, men, women and children, working one thousand acres of land, might be expected to produce a clear profit of £3,000 a year (see above p. 458 note).

cost—allowing for rent and maintenance of buildings, furniture, etc.—was in 1844, under Owen's last governorship, £37 9s. 8d. a year for an adult and £19 8s. for a child. In 1845, partly from the increased number of residents amongst whom the rent charge was divided, partly because of a more stringent economy in food and clothing, this expenditure was reduced to £27 1s. and £16 11s. 9d. a year respectively. (*New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 368.)



Photo by L. Ehremayer, Ealing.

ROBERT OWEN.

From a plaster medallion by Miss Beech.

When the enormous surplus out of which the labourers were thus yearly cozened by an immoral social system was restored to the rightful owners there would be enough and to spare for all purposes of use and of enjoyment. In such circumstances palatial buildings, mahogany wainscoating, evening dances and concerts, flower gardens and convenient roads represented not extravagance but judicious expenditure.

Again, the Socialists believed that in Owen himself they had a leader who ranked amongst the foremost of the world's captains of industry. Had he not, as he himself had repeatedly told them, worked his way up, by his own skill and foresight, from poverty to wealth; had he not, by his prudent management, made enormous fortunes for himself and his partners at New Lanark? It was only after the experiment had gone on for some years that "the conviction gradually came upon the minds of nearly all, that Mr. Owen was no financier, and had no idea of money."¹

Such was the economic position as it presented itself to the Community of Harmony. But it is scarcely necessary to point out that the enterprise did not primarily present itself as an economic question at all. Those uncouth hymns to Community, those exhilarating balance sheets, with their confident appeal from the inggardliness of the past to the generosity of the coming years, the mystic "C.M." carved over the doorway, the triumphant new chronology—all these were the genuine expressions of an aspiration after a better social order which had but little of the selfish or the sordid. An ideal which found its embodiment in a life of well-fed unlaborious

¹ Letter from Ironside to Goldsmid, *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 340.

content would not perhaps stimulate to great enterprises. But the ease and plenty to which the Socialists aspired were not for themselves alone; they looked for nothing less than the regeneration of the whole effete system of society—with all its struggles and misery, its stunted bodies and starved lives, its countless sum of futilities and degradations. The ideal of life in a Community stood for the Socialists in place of a religion, and they set themselves to realise it with something of the religious recklessness of material conditions. What is the worth of an ideal which does not drive men at least to attempt the impossible? Who would be so craven as to count the cost, when salvation, if only mundane salvation, for themselves and their fellows depended upon their courage and enthusiasm?

Thus Mr. John Cramp, the last Secretary of the Congress, writes from Harmony Hall in August, 1845, when the colony was already broken up and the buildings deserted, "I can scarcely persuade myself that this is a reality. I look back on what we have been, and what we are; we were a Society united for the holiest of purposes; we had a leader in whom we reposed the most unbounded confidence—nay, by many of us he was almost worshipped, and all were ready to follow to the death for the accomplishment of our object . . . and now we are disjointed, cast down and powerless. A spirit of discord has been among us, and blown our strength and our purpose to the winds, and, in the day of our adversity, those who should have been the truest friends to our cause are sacrificing the Society to individual interest."¹

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 505.

The writer's lament, it will be seen, is all for the cause that had been betrayed. And this temper, with one or two exceptions, marked the whole course of the enterprise. When mismanagement abounded; when disaster succeeded disaster; when more and more of the hard-earned pence of the working members were called for to save from total loss all that had been spent before, when the resident members were asked to sacrifice one little comfort or luxury after another, the Socialists rose again and again to the demands made upon them. And they recognised and condoned in others the same generous contempt for material limitations of which they were conscious in themselves. There was no blame for Owen and those who should have advised and controlled him when it appeared that all the available resources of the Society had been lavishly expended without any prospect of immediate return. And when for the second time Owen had betrayed their hopes, and the more level-headed men from the north took upon themselves to manage the business, and endeavoured by more prudent husbandry to restore the fortunes of the enterprise—even when they too failed, and the Socialists were forced at last to admit the defeat of their dreams, and many also the loss of all their possessions, they accepted the failure not without dignity. There were no doubt misunderstandings, sharp differences of opinion, even in some cases mutual reproaches. But there were no squalid outbursts of baffled egotism and greed, no wild accusations of fraud and corruption, dishonouring alike to accuser and accused. All were involved in a common misfortune, but even in defeat they still nursed an unsullied hope.

And to us, looking back upon the enterprise with unprejudiced eyes, it is clear to be seen that, disastrous as failure was, in success—such success as alone could have been attained in the conditions—lay the possibility of more ignoble disaster. That the little band of colonists, by a more scrupulous calculation of ways and means, a more judicious expenditure on their schools and buildings, a more prudent husbandry and household economy, should have grown fat and comfortable, and should then have found that there was not enough for all—should have been forced to choose between sharing again the leanness and discomfort of their fellows, or holding fast, at whatever sacrifice of honour and loyalty, to the good things which had fallen to their lot, and should have made the wrong choice,—only in such a case would there have been disaster complete and irremediable.

CHAPTER XXIII

1848

THE end of Harmony may be told in few words. Mr. John Buxton, the last Governor and one of the assignees appointed by the Congress of July, 1845, remained, as already said, with his wife and family in the Hall until June, 1846. Buxton appears to have been an entirely honourable man. But he was a poor man, an artisan, and notwithstanding the fact that the Central Board under his governorship had prepared admirable balance sheets and analyses of expenditure, it is probable that he was scarcely competent to deal with questions involving large sums of money. And, indeed, there was need of an expert to disentangle the complicated financial questions arising out of the ruin of the Queenwood enterprise. Moreover, the appointment of assignees, in supersession of the existing board of trustees, was a step of doubtful legality. The very existence of the Society itself was considered by some to be a breach of the law. And any way, whatever the legal position of the assignees, it was the trustees who were in fact responsible to the lessor for the rent, which was now more than twelve months in arrear. There had been meetings between Finch, Pare, Bracher and Buxton in May, 1846, but, no agreement could be

arrived at; and ultimately Finch, acting upon legal advice, early in June took forcible possession of the property and turned Buxton and his family, not, however, without due notice, on to the roadside. On the roadside Buxton insisted on remaining—in a tent: and the Congress summoned by him to meet at Harmony Hall at the end of June began its proceedings in the tent and ultimately adjourned to Rose Hill, the small manor house which had been purchased by Owen. At this meeting a series of resolutions was moved by Pare, one of the assignees, recognising the legal rights of the trustees in the matter, and calling upon Buxton to afford them every assistance in his power. The resolutions were ultimately passed without a dissentient voice.¹

Shortly afterwards Harmony Hall itself and the adjacent grounds were let for the purposes of a school to Mr. George Edmondson, a member of the Society of Friends. Mr. Edmondson was a well-known educationalist; he had also been employed by the Czar in carrying out some plans for the advancement of agriculture.²

The system of instruction pursued at Queenwood College—for that was the name of the new institution—was such as Owen himself might have approved. Besides classical and modern languages there were taught chemistry, natural philosophy, painting, music, and surveying. Attached to the school was a farm department, of eight hundred acres, at which the pupils

¹ *Reasoner*, Vol. I., pp. 38-40, 81-88, 96; Holyoake's *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., pp. 307, 308.

² *Spirit of the Age*, Vol. I., p. 6 (July 1848).

were afforded opportunity for the scientific study of agriculture and farming operations. The school attained some celebrity. Amongst the resident masters were J. Haas, from Fellenberg's Institution at Hofwyl, and Professor Tyndall, who continued for some years to lecture in natural philosophy and mathematics.

An illustrated school paper was published under the editorship of the students—the *Queenwood Reporter*, afterwards taking the title of the *Queenwood Observer*.¹

For some years no serious attempt was made to wind up the affairs of the Society; from time to time the trustees were urged to give an account of their stewardship, but declined to do so. Ultimately, in 1861, William Pare, who had taken the leading part in composing the quarrels of 1846, entered an action against them in the Court of Chancery to compel the rendering of accounts. The case was tried before Lord Romilly, Master of the Rolls. The most noteworthy feature in the defence was that the trustees instructed, or at least permitted, their counsel to plead that the action would not lie because the Rational Society was founded for illegal purposes, and for the propagation of immoral doctrines. The judge considered and dis-

¹ The Rev. A. Woodin, Rector of Broughton—the nearest village to Queenwood—has kindly furnished me with particulars of the end of Queenwood College. Edmondson's School after some years proved financially a failure. He was succeeded by a Mr. W., who also conducted a school, but eventually had to abandon the enterprise. Towards the end of last century the buildings came into the occupation of a Mr. D., who ran "an electrical engineering and poultry farming establishment." Mr. W. remained on the premises and acted as secretary to the new proprietor. On June 10, 1901, a fire broke out and the buildings were burnt down, Mr. W. perishing in the flames. The remnants of the building were ultimately sold and carted away, so that now not one stone remains on another.

missed the plea, and judgment was given in favour of the plaintiff. In the event the property was sold and the proceeds divided amongst the shareholders. The hundreds of small subscribers to the original Community Fund received nothing.¹

We must now return to consider the fate of the parent Society. As may be readily conceived, the events of 1845 and 1846 reacted seriously upon the enthusiasm of the members; subscriptions fell off; and it seemed for a time as if the Society would cease altogether. In the *Reasoner* for June 17, 1846, we find John Cramp, Vice-President, urging all who still take an interest in the Society to pay their subscriptions in order that they may not lose their membership, and with it the right to vote.² On the 30th of the same month the Honorary Financial Secretary reports that there are only 187 members in the Society who have paid their subscription for the current year. Of these 187, 41 belong to London, 22 to Sheffield, 15 to Glasgow, and 10 to Rochdale.³ The Society did in fact continue to exist for some years longer. But the fate of Harmony Hall was a sufficient warning against premature experiments in Community-building. In March, 1848, when the new French Republic was organising a Socialist experiment on a colossal scale, the question of renewing the Socialist propaganda in this country was raised at a meeting held at the John Street Social Institution. Whereupon the Sheffield Branch, at a meeting in the Hall of Science, Sheffield, on March 26, "Resolved,

¹ *Reasoner*, Vol. XXVI., p. 306; Holyoke's *History*, Vol. I. pp. 309, 310.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I. p. 40.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

that until Messrs. Owen, Pare, Finch, Jones and others have brought the affairs of Harmony to an open, honourable and satisfactory settlement, this Branch cannot co-operate in any plan whatever for the public agitation of social principles.”¹

This resolution was addressed to the Central Board of the Rational Society ; and the implication that the propagandism of “Social”—*i.e.* Socialist—principles was not a necessary part of the Society’s work requires some commentary. In fact the objects of the Society of many names, originally founded by Owen in May, 1835, as the “Association of All Classes of All Nations,” could be regarded from several points of view ; and one aspect or another was emphasised according to the circumstances of the time and the prepossessions of the individual member. The two primary aims were the re-constitution of the religious and ethical codes of the world on a new basis—the non-responsibility of the individual for his character and actions ; and the reconstruction of the social system. The second aim, as one that seemed capable of more speedy realisation in practice, had absorbed the attention of the leaders for some years. But as we have seen, even in the height of the Community-building fever Holyoake, Southwell and others had devoted their energies mainly to the more general propaganda of a “rational” religion and system of morality. Probably the provincial branches generally, as being less under Owen’s personal influence, tended always to lay stress rather upon the ethical than on the social reconstruction. In this connection it is significant that whilst the London Branches named their places of

¹ *Reasoner*, Vol. IV., p. 349.

meeting "Social Institutions," the provincial towns generally preferred the title "Halls of Science."¹ The very name of the Society in recent years emphasised the religious (or anti-religious) rather than the social aspect of its activities. Up till the beginning of May, 1842, it had been known to the world as "The Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists." But at the Congress which met in that month a change was made in the name of the Society, and in the declaration of its objects. The crisis was brought about by the action of the Bishop of Chester. Since the prosecutions of 1840 the Society had, as we have seen, held themselves entitled to register their halls as places of public worship for Protestant Dissenters under the Act 52 George III. c. 155. But the Bishop of Chester in 1841 refused any longer to grant licences to the Socialist Halls; and refused also to submit the question of the legality of his action to arbitration. The Central Board debated the question of applying for a mandamus, but ultimately, considering "that our Society would be descending from that high moral position which it claims, by admitting itself to be a Protestant Association in any meaning that is generally assigned to the term," resolved to dispense with the Bishop's licence, and to stand under their own colours. The Congress accordingly resolved:

1. That the Society should henceforth be known simply as "The Rational Society."
2. "That the principle on which it is based is that the character of man is formed for him."
3. "That the object of the Society is to make man

¹ See the list given in the *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 312.

rational being, and society united, wealthy, intelligent and happy."

In the description of the means by which this new state was to be attained only the most general terminology was employed and no direct reference is made to the formation of Communities of united interest.¹

After the break-up in 1845 the Society was represented for a time in London by the *Moral World*, a newspaper started by G. A. Fleming, which ran for a few months; then by the *Herald of Progress*, edited by John Cramp, which ran from October, 1845, to May, 1846. On June 3, 1846, appeared the first number of the *Reasoner*, edited by G. J. Holyoake, which continued until June, 1861. The *Reasoner*, according to the opening editorial, "will be Communistic in Social Economy, Utilitarian in Morals, Republican in Politics, and Anti-theological in Religion." But as time went on the first article of this creed gradually dropped out of sight. The John Street Hall so early as 1846 changed its name from the Social Institution to the "Literary and Scientific Institution."² The Socialist Missionaries returned to their trades; entered the ranks of journalism; or, if they lectured at all, preferred to discourse on the new electrical theories, the revelations of phrenology and mesmerism, or the superiority of Secularism over Christianity as a guide through life "to mankind generally and the working classes in particular."³

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 377. ² *Reasoner*, Vol. I., p. 142.

³ See the *Reasoner passim*. Vol. I., p. 11, gives an account of the occupations of the ex-missionaries. The sentence quoted in the text is taken from the title page of a Public Discussion between the Rev. Edwin Grant and Mr. G. J. Holyoake, London, 1853.

But if the Rational Society soon died out in London a flourishing offshoot of it has lasted to the present day. The National Community Friendly Society was, as we have seen, founded at the Manchester Congress of 1837 in connection with the Association of All Classes of All Nations. The two Societies were amalgamated in 1839. At the Congress of 1842 the Manchester delegate was able to report that his branch (Branch No. 1) reckoned no fewer than 386 members and candidates, and was in a very flourishing condition. In the list of the 187 members of the Rational Society given in the *Reasoner* in June, 1846, no representative from Manchester appears. It would seem therefore that the Manchester Branch had already resolved to have no more to do either with experimental Socialism or militant Rationalism. In fact they had restricted their operations to the narrower and safer sphere of a Friendly Society for providing funds for sickness and burial. The Society is now known as the "Rational Association Friendly Society," and has its headquarters at the Rational Buildings, Manchester. It claims to have been founded in 1837 by Robert Owen, and its almanac for 1906 bears a picture of Owen himself and of the ideal village. It has at the present time nearly nine hundred branches distributed over the whole of England; its members number 124,000, and its accumulated funds amount to £540,000. It is interesting to note that there was in 1904 one member on its books who joined in 1843, when Harmony Hall was still a going concern.

Again, to many of the Socialists, amongst whom Holyoake himself and Lloyd Jones were the chief, there was soon opened a more congenial field of activity than

the celebration of the barren gospel of Secularism. Even while the enterprise at Queenwood was hastening to its final disaster, the seed which Owen sowed had in another part of the kingdom fallen on fertile soil, and was destined to bear fruit abundantly. Towards the end of 1843 a committee of flannel-weavers at Rochdale—the seat of an active Branch of the Rational Society—appealed to the masters for a rise of wages; and prepared, in the event of refusal, for a strike fund by ordaining a levy of 2*d.* a week from each member in full employment. In the event the masters refused the application, and the committee met to determine whether they should strike or not. The members present were all agreed that something must be done. To organise a strike before they had accumulated funds seemed too hazardous. Some were for political agitation—the Charter and Reform. Others were for reviving the co-operative schemes of the previous decade. Ultimately the Socialists—the leaders of whom appear to have been Charles Howarth, who figures occasionally in the Manchester Correspondence, and William Cooper, both enthusiastic disciples of Owen—carried the day. They determined to carry out the idea of a weekly subscription of 2*d.* each member, and to use the money so accumulated to form a Trading Fund.

The Society was registered in October, 1844, under the title of the “Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers.” The following extracts from their prospectus will show their aims:—

“The objects and plans of this Society are to form arrangements for the pecuniary benefit and the improve-

ment of the social and domestic condition of its members, by raising a sufficient amount of capital in shares of one pound each to bring into operation the following plans and arrangements :

“The establishment of a store for the sale of provisions, clothing, &c.

“The building, purchasing or erecting a number of houses in which those members desiring to assist each other in improving their domestic and social conditions may reside.

“To commence the manufacture of such articles as the Society may determine upon, for the employment of such members as may be without employment, or who may be suffering in consequence of repeated reductions in their wages.

“As a further benefit and security to the members of the Society, the Society shall purchase or rent an estate or estates of land which shall be cultivated by the members who may be out of employment, or whose labour may be badly remunerated.

“That for the promotion of sobriety, a Temperance Hotel be opened in one of the Society’s houses as soon as convenient.

“That as soon as practicable the Society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education and government ; or in other words to establish a self-supporting home-colony of united interests, or to assist other Societies in establishing such Colonies.”

The Society, it will be seen, was formed on the same lines, and set before itself the same aims as the numerous Co-operative Societies which sprang up from

1826 onwards. It followed, indeed, pretty closely the lines sketched out at the Congress of 1831, except that where Owen and his friends proposed to contribute pounds, the Rochdale weavers could only offer pence. But the pence were paid.

The Society opened its Store on December 21, 1844, amid the jeers of the small boys of the town. Their members then numbered twenty-eight and their whole capital amounted to £28. Thirteen years later, in 1857, their numbers were 1,850, their capital over £15,000, and their annual sales £80,000.¹

The success of the Rochdale Pioneers and the mighty movement which sprang from that insignificant beginning are matters of history. The co-operators of Great Britain now number two million two hundred thousand: their share capital exceeds £28,000,000, and all their transactions are on the same colossal scale. But in achieving this immediate success, they have lost sight of the larger aims which inspired the beginning of the movement. Co-operators of the present day are not conspicuously more eager than other persons to raise the standard of education for their children, and the lesson of Queenwood has been so thoroughly learnt that in the long list of Co-operative Productive Societies I cannot find one devoted to agriculture.²

It is matter of history that this mighty tree grew from the seed scattered broadcast by Robert Owen. Nor are the co-operators themselves slow to acknowledge

¹ I have taken this account from Holyoake's *History of the Rochdale Pioneers* (Tenth edition, 1900). See also Beatrice Potter's *Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, p. 61.

² Co-operative Union; Report to Paisley Congress, with Statistics for 1904.

their indebtedness to the great Socialist. One and all look up to Owen as the founder of their movement, regardless of the fact that the master expressly repudiated them and their ideals in the day of small beginnings, and would, it is to be feared, equally repudiate them as disciples now in the height of their material prosperity.

It is now time to take up again the thread of Owen's personal career. As will have been gathered from the last chapter, he took no active part in the closing scenes at Harmony Hall. In the autumn of 1844 he had gone to the United States on a mission to preach his doctrines, and remained there, with the exception of a few weeks in the summer of 1845 which were spent in England, until the spring of 1846. He stayed some time with his family at New Harmony; visited the Ohio Phalanx, Brook Farm, and Hopedale—three of the most important Socialist Communities of the time; delivered many lectures throughout the country; interviewed Members of Congress and other eminent citizens, and summoned a "World's Convention" to meet him in New York in October, 1845. Adin Ballou, the founder of Hopedale, afterwards well known as a Spiritualist, who met him about this time, gives the following characterisation of him:

"Robert Owen is a remarkable character. In years nearly seventy-five; in knowledge and experience superabundant; in benevolence of heart transcendental; in honesty without disguise; in philanthropy unlimited; in religion a sceptic; in theology a pantheist; in metaphysics a necessarian circumstantialist; in morals a universal excusionist; in general conduct a philosophic non-resistant; in socialism a Communist; in hope a

terrestrial elysianist ; in practical business a methodist ; in deportment an unequivocal gentleman.”¹ The enthusiasm inspired by the subject may perhaps excuse the novelty of the terminology employed.

On his return to this country in 1846, Owen was entrusted by his son, Robert Dale Owen, then a member of the Federal House of Representatives, with a diplomatic mission of a delicate nature. The question of the delimitation of the boundary between Oregon and British North America was at that time in an acute stage. By an agreement entered into in 1818 the 49th parallel of latitude had been fixed as the boundary between British and American territory from the Lake of the Woods on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the west, but the delimitation of the region between the Rocky Mountains and the sea had been left undetermined. At the end of 1842 the British Government approached the Government of the United States with a view to a settlement, and thereafter for some years the matter was much canvassed in the press of both countries, as well as in political speeches and in diplomatic negotiations. In March, 1845, an unfortunate speech of the American President, Polk, brought the question to a point at which war seemed only too probable a solution. War indeed loomed so near that a Radical member of the House of Commons forbore on that account to move a reduction in the Army Estimates.² Matters continued in a critical state for more than a year. The Americans claimed that the line of the 49th parallel should be continued to the western seaboard ; the British Government

¹ Quoted by Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 88, 89.

² Walpole, *History*, Vol. V., p. 341, note.

contended that the northernmost tributary of the Columbia River should form the boundary—a line which would have allowed them to approach some 150 miles to the southward. Neither side seemed willing to abate their pretensions. Robert Dale Owen had taken a keen interest in the question, and had given full proof of his patriotism to the country of his adoption. In January, 1844, he had delivered a speech in the House of Representatives on the subject, in which he had inveighed strongly against the greedy and overbearing nature of Great Britain's demands. Concession, he said, is an admirable policy within limits; charity and good neighbourship are excellent things to strive for—"But I may treat a neighbour kindly and courteously without being called upon to give him up half of my grazing farm, because he happens to have taken a fancy to it."

On April 1, 1846, just at the time when the Senate of the United States was preparing a resolution calling upon the President to terminate the existing convention and to take immediate steps to settle the boundary of the territory in dispute, Robert Dale Owen wrote to his father, then in New York preparing to start for England, enclosing in his letter a copy of a recent manifesto by Webster, proclaiming America's unalterable determination to accept no line south of the 49th parallel. The writer urged his father to place the document before the British Ministry, and to assure them that this declaration, made in so deliberate a fashion by a man of Webster's position, must be taken as representing accurately the views of the American people.

Nothing doubting his own competence in the matter, the elder Owen accepted the mission thus entrusted to him, and on his return to England in May sought and obtained an interview with Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary. Not content with this step, he further wrote to Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, as follows :

“TO SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.,

Prime Minister of the British Empire. (Confidential.)

“May, 1846.

“SIR,

“On you now rests, in an especial manner, the responsibility of directing the energies of the most formidable power that the world has yet known.

“That power is now at a crisis to make either an extraordinary advance to a much higher state of prosperity, or to enter on a course which will accumulate difficulties and create dangers that may destroy its present prosperity. I mean the combined power of the energies of Great Britain and the United States.

“In my recent interview with Lord Aberdeen he appeared to forget the entire change of feeling and policy which I effected in 1830 in favour of this country with the American Government,¹ and still less to be aware of what I have done in Washington and over the United States during the present Congress in favour of peace with this country.”

¹ The reference is to Owen's interview with Lord Aberdeen after his return from America in 1829. See above, p. 345.

Peel briefly and courteously acknowledged the letter and its enclosure ; also a further letter sent on the following day ; but he declined to give Owen an interview, and expressed the belief "that Lord Aberdeen would concur with Sir Robert Peel in the opinion that no public advantage would arise from Mr. Owen's authorised interference in the matter to which his letters refer."¹

Eventually Lord Aberdeen succeeded in obtaining the consent of the American Government to a compromise. The 49th parallel was accepted as the boundary line to the coast, but the whole of Vancouver's Island was retained under British sovereignty. And Owen could at least cherish the belief that he had contributed by his personal exertions to the happy issue of what might have proved a dangerous dispute.

After the settlement of the Oregon question Owen again returned to America for a time, but was back in this country in the summer of 1847, and at the General Election of that year received an invitation to stand for the Borough of Marylebone. He actually issued his election address, but did not go to the poll.² The following extract from the address gives a list of the measures which he professed himself prepared to advocate, should he be returned to Parliament :—

" 1. A graduated property tax equal to the national expenditure.

" 2. The abolition of all other taxes.

" 3. No taxation without representation.

" 4. Free Trade with all the world.

¹ The Correspondence is preserved in the Manchester Collection.

² See *Times*, July 29, 1847.

“ 5. National education for all who desire it.

“ 6. National beneficial employment for all who require it.

“ 7. Full and complete freedom of religion, under every name by which men may call themselves.

“ 8. A national circulating medium, under the supervision and control of Parliament, that could be increased or diminished as wealth for circulation increased or diminished ; and that should be, by its ample security, unchangeable in its value.

“ 9. National military training for all male children in schools, that the country may be protected against foreign invasion, without the present heavy permanent military expenditure.”

In August of this year Owen deputed Pare and Campbell to wait upon the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (the Earl of Clarendon) and furnish him with particulars of Owen's plan for the immediate relief of the distress in that country. Lord Clarendon received the deputation courteously, and conversed with them for about twenty minutes on the state of agriculture, fisheries and manufactures in Ireland.¹

Later in the same year Owen himself went to Ireland, where he stayed for a time with his old friend, Lord Cloncurry, and had an interview with the Lord Lieutenant on his own account.

The following year, 1848, was big with events which had a special interest for Owen and his disciples. Of the abortive Chartist demonstration on April 10

¹ Letter dated August 10, 1847, from Pare to Owen describing the interview. (Manchester Collection.)

we hear indeed but little in Owen's correspondence. Thomas Allsop¹ writes on April 8, "Very great alarm prevails here, and very grave apprehensions are entertained for the peace of the country generally by grave and reflecting men. The worst feature is the antagonism of classes shewn by the readiness of the middle classes to become special constables." This letter was addressed to Owen in Paris.

The Revolution had broken out on February 22 ; on the 24th Louis Philippe had abdicated and a Republican Government had been set up, with high ideals of industrial reorganisation. National workshops had been opened in Paris and employment with adequate wages was offered to all who applied for it. The scheme was as magnificently unpractical as any of Owen's own, and on a scale as large as his dreams. His friends were quick to seize the opportunity and urge Owen himself to proceed to Paris and instruct the revolutionaries in the true principles of social reconstruction. Thus William Pare writes on March 2, 1848 :

"By St. Paul, the work goes bravely on. It has become patent to all parties, the workpeople, the journalists, both French and English, and the New Republican Government, that this last is truly an 'Industrial Revolution,' and that it will in all probability render necessary an entire reorganisation of industry. . . .

¹ Thomas Allsop, a Lincolnshire landowner, friend of Coleridge and of Lamb. He had given Feargus O'Connor a qualification of £300 in land when he first became M.P. for Nottingham. A late convert, apparently, to Socialism. (G. J. Holyoake in the *Co-operative News*, June 11, 1904.)

"It is evident that the *monied* aristocracy is growing alarmed at this, and that the *Times* will leave no stone unturned to draw the new Government from its purpose. . . .

. . . this French Revolution will completely open up the general question with which we have been so long occupied under your guidance. The events of one little week have carved out enough work for you in Europe without as yet thinking of America."

Finch follows in the same strain on the 7th of the same month :

"DEAR FATHER,

"Permit me to offer my warmest congratulations on the unspeakable happiness you must experience in the wonderful changes that have taken place amongst that noblest of the nations of the Earth, the French People. All your purposes are being fulfilled, all your highest aspirations for human liberty and social development and for human improvement and human happiness are about to be realised in that glorious country. You see the labour of your soul and the business of your life realised, and must be abundantly satisfied. The Commission you have so often sought and which you have so often beseeched the ignorant and benighted and prejudiced Government of England to form, for the purpose of enquiring into the causes of the miserable and destitute condition of her labouring population, the new Government of regenerated France has already formed, and it is now pursuing with untiring diligence

its sacred, its Divine Mission, which I have the most confident hopes will issue in the emancipation of the world. Should you not address them with counsel and assistance in these momentous affairs ? ” . . .

Owen went to Paris at the end of March. In April he had interviews with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (? Lamartine), with Garnier Pagès, originally Mayor of Paris and afterwards one of the Commission du Pouvoir exécutif, with Louis Blanc and others. Early in June, accompanied by his friend Goupy, who no doubt went in the capacity of interpreter—for Owen apparently could neither read nor speak French—he attended the Comité du Travail, on the invitation of the President, A. Corbon, and expounded his system before them. Paris was deluged with Owenite literature. Owen prepared addresses to the men and women of France ; to the National Assembly ; “ Au peuple français, aux militaires et aux civiles ”—the last named being placarded on the walls of Paris ; wrote letters to the newspapers ; prepared translations of some of his earlier pamphlets ; and wrote two entirely new ones—“ Dialogue entre les membres de la Commission exécutive, les ambassadeurs d’Angleterre, etc.” ; and “ Dialogue entre la France, le Monde et Robert Owen.” These letters and pamphlets were printed by the thousand and distributed gratis to the members of the National Assembly and other prominent citizens ; and it appears from the documents included in the Manchester Correspondence that Owen had some difficulty in meeting the printer’s bills.

The following extract from the second address to

the National Assembly, dated May 21, 1848, will give an idea of the general tenour of these documents. After reciting his own experiences and relating how he had discovered the errors of all religions and all governments in the past, Owen concludes: "Having also discovered, in the due order of time, and in accordance with the eternal laws of nature and of God, the foundations of a new life to all humanity, of a new character for man to be created from birth, in a new manner, to enable him to acquire the spirit of universal charity and love, and to be filled with valuable theoretic and practical knowledge, and thus to avoid past and present evils, and to ensure the future rapid progress and continued increase of the happiness of the human race, I come to your country in this important crisis in the history of all nations to explain in the spirit of kindness and love for you and the entire family of man, in what manner you may render useless all implements of destruction, give happiness to France, and, through its example, ensure the permanent progressive happiness of the world."

M. Goupy, already mentioned, appears to have been Owen's chief guide and attendant during his stay in Paris. But an Irishman, Hugh Doherty, who had been in the thick of the movement from the beginning, took charge of him for a time.¹ The following letter from him gives a vivid picture of the hopes and aspirations of the revolutionists:—

¹ Doherty was already known to Owen. He had attended the Congress of May, 1840, and had there presented an address from a number of Co-operators resident in Paris, expressing their sympathy and appreciation of the work being done in England. (*New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1314.)

"HUGH DOHERTY TO MRS. WHEELER.

"PARIS, RUE DES BEAUX-ARTS 5.

"May 7, 1848.

"DEAR MRS. WHEELER,

"I should have answered your very kind letter earlier, but I have been waiting for Mr. Owen's return to England. He is very well, and very busy here, getting out a translation of his lectures in the Egyptian Hall. He will probably be with you soon and give you an account of all that is going on.

"I have been very busily engaged in the revolution movement up to the present time, but as things are beginning to assume a more steady course, I am returning to my quiet avocations.

"I do not know if I told you that I passed the greater part of the 24th of February in the Palace of the Thuilleries as soon as Louis Philippe had left, in writing out proclamations of the Republic, with which the people went to turn out the Chamber of Deputies, who were busily engaged in Concocting a Regency.

"The Republic is universally accepted now, and the only difficulty is the social question. The privileged classes have swallowed the pill of political change, but they cannot swallow that of social reorganisation. They are, however, becoming more and more familiar with the idea of such a change sooner or later, and by and by their fears and apprehensions will be less violent.

"The clubs and the papers are now engaged daily in discussing social questions, and the rights of woman are constantly put forth in all the clubs, though not as yet in the public press. It is a glorious sight to see

the clubs discussing and the thousand motley groups of animated talkers in the public streets and promenades ; and though confused ideas are more abundantly put forth than common sense and simple truths, still there is a hearty wish to learn what should be done to forward the best interests of humanity.

“I am sorry to learn that things go on so badly in Ireland. When will that unhappy country ever revive ? England, I fear, is moving on too slowly to arrive in time at any practical solution of her difficulties.

“It would do you good to be over here now ; the moral atmosphere would give you life. Could you not come over ?

“I send you the little knot of tricolor I wore myself in the first struggle. It would have been lost, long ago, if you had not asked for such a thing in your last letter.

“It smatters of the hurry of the time in its rude simplicity.¹

“Ever yours faithfully,

“HUGH DOHERTY.”

Then came the Four Days of June. Early in July the National Workshops were closed, and Owen's interest in the Revolution appears to have waned after that event. Goupy writes repeatedly to ask Owen to fulfil his promise of writing letters on the system for insertion in the French papers. Goupy himself continued the propaganda, however, without Owen's aid, and in the following year suffered imprisonment for the cause.²

¹ The tricolor, three separate bits of cheap ribbon—white, red and blue—hastily stitched together, is preserved with the letter in the Manchester Correspondence.

² Letter from William Pare, June 23, 1849.

Owen's last contribution to the affairs of France was an address to Louis Napoleon on his election as President in December of this year.

One other letter of this date may be quoted, from Lord Brougham, giving the characteristic view of the propertied classes.

"July 5, 1848.

"DEAR R. O.,

"Your letter came safe. I had an opportunity to send the letter (and yours to the Q.) to Prince A., and I had a very kind and gracious answer. He undertook to deliver it as requested.

"On Saturday week I explained to a Juvenile Delinquency Meeting in the City your being author of Infant Schools, and gave their whole History including J. Buchanan being lent to us by you. It is now a clearly understood point in Education History. Let me hear from you what the Louis Blanc men are about. Do you want an introduction to Ld. Normanby?

"Impress on all who desire success to the Republic that all depends as to the favour found here in England on their giving the King and Princes their property or a large portion of it, and not plundering them. The cry is *universal* against them on this."

In explanation of the remarks at the beginning of Brougham's letter, it should be explained that during the later part of his life Owen was continually besieging royalties, ministers and important personages generally with addresses and petitions on his system. In that very year he had already sent four or five letters to the Queen,

through the Prince Consort. The Prince at first accepted and duly acknowledged them through his secretary. But at last he rebelled, and sent a sharp rebuke to Owen—"You must be aware that the only constitutional method of addressing the Sovereign upon matters relating to the Government of this Country is through the advisers of the Crown, who are responsible for the administration of the Government."¹

¹ Letter from C. B. Phipps, dated Windsor Castle, November 28, 1848.

CHAPTER XXIV

SPIRITUALISM

FOR some three years after the collapse of the Harmony experiment Owen published no important work, and had no periodical to represent his views. In 1849, however, there appeared a slim octavo volume, *The Revolution in the Mind and Practice of the Human Race: or the Coming change from Irrationality to Rationality*, recapitulating the chief points of his system already set forth in the *Book of the New Moral World*.¹

In November, 1850, appeared the first number of *Robert Owen's Journal, explanatory of the means to well-place, well-employ and well-educate the Population of the World*; and from this time onwards he was represented by a succession of periodicals until his death in 1858. The *Journal* ran until October, 1852. In February of the following year appeared the *Rational Quarterly Review*, of which four numbers were published. The first five Parts of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth* appeared in 1854; Parts VI., VII. and VIII. in 1855. Lastly, the *Millennial Gazette* ran from March, 1856, to June, 1858.

The Rational Society by this time appears to have

¹ See above, Chapter xxi.

dissolved into its constituent elements. The A1 Branch, whose local habitation was at 23, John Street, had, as already recorded, changed its name. It was ultimately known as the General Literary and Scientific Institution.¹ It was still the headquarters in London of Owen's disciples and well-wishers. The several World's Congresses and Conventions, after the inaugural meeting, which generally took place in some public hall hired for the purpose, continued their session in the big Lecture Hall of the John Street establishment. It was here that meetings were held to celebrate Owen's birthday, and congratulatory addresses presented.² There were regular lectures and Sunday services, and a permanent choir. An old member of the Institution tells me that he belonged to the choir, that he had heard Owen lecture in the hall, and that he recollects how all those present would stand up when the venerable founder entered.³ There was still a Society at Manchester,⁴ and little groups of disciples at Birmingham, Stockport, and elsewhere. There was a

¹ *Kelly's Directory* for 1858.

² See e.g. *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. II., p. 43.

³ The "General Literary and Scientific Institution" appears to have come to an end after Owen's death, for its place is vacant in the *Directory* for 1859. In 1860 the premises were taken by an auctioneer; afterwards they became a repository for iron and tin ware. Somewhere between 1865 and 1870 the name of the street was changed to Whitfield Street, and the houses were re-numbered. The premises, which are now numbered 40, Whitfield Street and known as the Albert Rooms, have reverted in part to their original use, for they serve as a Dancing Saloon and Academy. The courteous proprietor allowed me to see the hall—now a spacious ball-room—which still retains part of the old galleries.

⁴ *Journal*, Vol. II., p. 40. The Manchester Society at this time is styled the "Social Society." It does not appear whether this is identical with the Rational Friendly Society referred to in the previous chapter.

flourishing Redemption Society at Leeds, which seemed to be following in Owen's footsteps. In 1850—the fifth year of its existence—it was able to report that nine of its members were now settled on the Society's own land, and that they had begun to manufacture shoes, and hoped to follow on with tailoring.¹

But there was no organised body of disciples, as in the great days of 1832-45. Owen's later periodicals no longer, as in the days of the *Crisis* and the *New Moral World*, recorded the varying fortunes of great Socialist experiments. In default of material of this kind, their columns were filled with repetitions of Owen's message in various forms, leading articles, Addresses to Government, letters to prominent statesmen; and with reprints of Owen's previous publications, such as the *Dublin Report* and the documents which appear in the Appendix to his *Autobiography*. In short his mind was now feeding on itself: he could but repeat his message in endless monotony. He continued, however, down to the end of his life to hold public meetings, or Congresses, on the date of his birthday. Thus on May 14, 1854, he delivered an "Address to the Human Race: with his last legacy to the Governors and Governed of all Nations." On the corresponding date in the following year there was a public meeting to celebrate the commencement of the millennium. Two months later, in July, 1855, we read of "the Millennium in practice"—so that it did at last march—on paper.² On May 14, 1856, there was a "Congress of the

¹ *Journal*, Vol. I., p. 136. The farm is stated to have been in Carmarthenshire.

² *The Millennium in Practice, being the Report of the Adjourned Public Meeting of the World's Convention, July 30, 1855.* London, 1855.



Reformers of the World." Even in his last year, 1858, a meeting assembled on the same date "To consider the best means immediately to commence practical measures to NEW FORM MAN AND NEW FORM SOCIETY."¹ Owen was too feeble himself on this occasion to read to the meeting the address which he had prepared. That task was undertaken by Mr. Cooper ; but Owen, as we are told, frequently interposed during the reading with further explanations and illustrations.

But though after four-score years he could add nothing to the exposition of his social system, Owen was not forced to content himself with merely repeating the message with which he was charged to his generation. In his last years he preached a surprising new gospel, not in opposition to his former teaching, but as supplementing and confirming it. The second number of the *Rational Quarterly Review* is mainly devoted to Owen's correspondence during the previous quarter with Prince Albert, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Ministers, on the occasion of sending them copies of the first number of the periodical. But the number ends with "a Manifesto to all Governments and all Peoples" :

"A great moral revolution is about to be effected for the human race, and by an apparent miracle.

"Strange and incredible as it will at first appear, communications, most important and gratifying, have been made to great numbers in America, and to many in this country, through manifestations, by invisible but audible powers, purporting to be from departed spirits ;

¹ *Millennial Gazette*, June 21, 1858.

and to me especially from President Jefferson,—Benjamin Franklin,—His Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent—Grace Fletcher, my first and most enlightened disciple,¹—and many members of my own family, Welch and Scotch. . . . By investigating the history of these manifestations in America, and subsequently, as will be narrated, through the proceedings of an American medium, by whose peculiar organisation manifestations are obtained, I have been compelled, contrary to my previous strong convictions, to believe in a future conscious state of life, existing in a *refined material*, or what is called a spiritual state, and that, from the natural progress of creation, these departed spirits have attained the power to communicate, by various means, their feelings and knowledge to us living upon the earth.

“From the communications which have been made to me, through the aid of this American medium, from the father of our present Sovereign, Jefferson, Franklin and Grace Fletcher, I am informed that these new manifestations, or revelations, from the spiritual, or more truly, the refined material world, are made for the purpose of changing the present false, disunited and miserable state of human existence, for a true, united, and happy state, to arise from a new universal education, or formation of character, from birth, to be based on truth, and conducted in accordance with the established laws of human nature. . . . Were it not for these new and most extraordinary mani-

¹ Grace Fletcher was engaged to “the late Professor Brown of Edinburgh,” and died at the age of nineteen. Owen had no doubt known her when he was living at New Lanark. (*Future of the Human Race* [1853], p. 31.)

tations, there would arise a conflict between the evil spirits of democracy and aristocracy, which would deluge the world with blood, and would create universal violence and slaughter among all nations. But these manifestations appear to be made at this period, to prepare the world for universal peace, and to infuse into all the spirit of charity, forbearance and love.

"These new and extraordinary manifestations have not changed my confidence in the truth of the principles which I have so long advocated, nor my assurance of the benefits to be derived from their universal application to practice. On the contrary, the certainty of the immense permanent advantages to be insured by the adoption of this system by the human race, has been confirmed to me by the spirits of Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, the Duke of Kent, and Grace Fletcher."

Owen then proceeded to describe how his attention had been first called to the subject. He had heard of the outburst of Spiritualism in America and had called on Mrs. Hayden, an American medium then on a visit to this country, to purchase a book on the spiritual manifestations written by his friend Adin Ballou.

"While conversing with Mrs. Hayden, and while we were both standing before the fire and talking of our mutual friends, suddenly raps were heard on a table at some distance from us, no one being near to it. I was surprised; and as the raps continued and appeared to indicate a strong desire to attract attention, I asked what was the meaning of the sounds. Mrs. Hayden said they were made by spirits anxious to communicate with some one, and she would enquire

who they were. They replied to her, by the alphabet that they were friends of mine who were desirous to communicate with me. Mrs. Hayden then gave me the alphabet and pencil, and I found, according to their own statements, that the spirits were those of my Mother and Father. I tested their truth by various questions, and their answers, all correct, surprised me exceedingly.”¹

Thereafter Owen had many *séances* with Mrs. Hayden, and satisfied himself, as he tells us, that the raps were not produced by her agency, and that he could obtain by this method correct information on subjects entirely unknown to Mrs. Hayden. As an illustration of the kind of information given, the following example may be quoted :

“I had then for some days various communications with the spirits of my deceased brothers and sisters, all of whom gave me true answers respecting the time and place of their death, &c. And all the spirits without one exception, who have said they were in communication with me have stated, emphatically, that they were ‘very very happy.’

“Calling one morning at Mrs. Hayden’s when she had just received a letter from my daughter in America I asked when raps were made, what spirits were present. The reply by the alphabet was, my daughters—‘Anne Caroline,’ and ‘Mary.’ I put the letter, unopened in its envelope, upon the table, and I asked if they knew from whom it came? The reply was ‘Yes.’ I requested they would spell the name of the writer, by the letters of the alphabet. They said they would and immediately they gave—‘Jane Dale Owen’—the writer’

¹ *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 126.

maiden name. I then asked if she had any other name? The answer was 'Yes.' What is it? 'Fontleroy.' The name being Fauntleroy. (The spirits often spell phonetically.)

"A day or two after this I called, on a very cold night, and I had protected myself by putting about my neck a new comforter, which had been lately sent me from America. It occurred to me to ask who sent it to me. I threw it upon the table, and asked the spirits said to be present, whose present was it? The answer was 'Martha Trist' (the true name of the young lady who sent it, and who is the great-granddaughter of President Jefferson). I then asked what was the name of the young lady's father? The answer was 'Nicholas Trist.' (Correct.)"¹

To the uninitiated, it must be admitted, these results seemed very surprising, and many persons were convinced who could not plead four-score years and two in excuse for their credulity. The explanation of the raps revealing the secrets of the mind is, in fact, a simple one. It did not satisfy Owen and other Spiritualists, partly because of its very simplicity.

For ten or twelve years before the date at which we are now arrived (1853) the wonder-loving public of England and America had been satiated with the marvels of mesmerism, electro-biology, phrenology and other so-called sciences. In America a series of remarkable trance-revelations had been given to the world in 1847 by an inspired cobbler's apprentice. In the following year two naughty little girls in a rural township in New

¹ *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 142.

York State had amused themselves and mystified their friends by means of a trick familiar to naughty little girls for many generations—to wit by rapping or cracking their toe-joints—using the foot of their wooden bedstead or the wooden walls of their parents' house as a sounding-board. The neighbours came and marvelled and the affable intelligence announced itself by raps as the spirit of a murdered pedlar. The excitement grew ; other “mediums ” learnt the trick—and in a few years the new gospel of Spiritualism had spread all over the United States. In the winter of 1852 it came to Paris ; and early in 1853 it crossed the Channel. In the spring and summer of that year all England was consulting spirits by means of tilting tables. On to a stage thus prepared for them came two or three American rapping mediums, who advertised in the following style:—“Spiritual Manifestations and Communications from departed friends, which so much gratify serious, enlightened minds, exemplified daily at. . . .”¹

The best known of these was Mrs. Hayden, wife of a gentleman who had at one time edited *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The procedure at Mrs. Hayden's *séances* was as follows : the consultant would be given a pencil, and a card with the alphabet printed on it, and would be requested to ask a question of the “spirits,” and to run the pencil slowly down the alphabet, until a rap was heard. The letter thus indicated would be noted down, and the process repeated until the whole word or sentence had been given. The “spirits” would answer almost as readily if the question were asked mentally, as if it were asked aloud.

¹ From the front page of the *Times*, April 16, 1853.

As to the method employed, it is not necessary to suppose that Mrs. Hayden cracked her toe-joints. Probably she used more convenient and up-to-date devices, but as her person was not searched and no efforts seem to have been made to ascertain how the raps were produced, it is impossible now to say what really happened. In fact the attention of most enquirers was diverted from the raps themselves to the seeming miracle of their intelligence—their all but omniscience! The explanation, as said, was extremely simple. The questioner's hands, holding pencil and card, were always in full view of the medium, who by long experience had learnt to detect the slight hesitation or other indications unconsciously afforded by the consultant when the right letter was reached, and to time her rap accordingly. At about the same date as Owen's manifesto G. H. Lewes in the *Leader* had explained to his readers how the trick was done, and related that by carefully emphasised hesitation at the appropriate letters he had held a conversation with one of the Eumenides, receiving much information, not to be found in any classical dictionary, about his interlocutor's domestic relations; and had induced the table to confess, in reply to his mental questions, that Mrs. Hayden was an impostor, and that the ghost of Hamlet's father had seventeen noses.¹

But for the most part demonstrations of this kind were addressed to deaf ears. It is so much easier and so much more exhilarating to believe at large in the efficacy of spiritual forces, than to fatigue the attention in the effort to understand and measure the operation of such humble agencies as our own fingers and our

¹ *Leader*, March 12, 1853.

neighbour's five senses. The champions of common sense found but a small audience. Many of those who at the early date "investigated" the subject seem to have abandoned themselves wholly to the guidance of the spirits. The history of one of the circles at which Owen attended—for other mediums were soon found to replace Mrs. Hayden—will serve to illustrate the procedure. Jacob Dixon was a homœopathic doctor practising in London, who appears at one time to have held some post at the Charlotte Street Institution.¹ He had for many years studied the phenomena of ecstasy and clairvoyance, his attention having been first led to the subject through seeing a patient mesmerised by Elliotson. He had, as he tells us later, become convinced by his investigations of the possibility of communication with spirits. At the height of the excitement caused by Mrs. Hayden's visit to this country, Dixon happened to call one day on a friend named E——, a professional phrenologist and healer. E—— was at the moment holding a *séance*, the medium (and only other sitter) being a little errand boy, nine years old, employed by him. With the permission of the spirits, Dixon was invited to join the party. He received through raps communications from various friends and relatives, and was informed that his guardian spirits were Job, Enoch, Noah and Bacon. Conviction came on the moment; and was deepened when at later sittings the raps undertook to prescribe for Dixon's patients, and also for himself. Moreover an epidemic of cholera in the autumn of 1853 was pre-

¹ Letter dated June 10, 1834, from Jacob Dixon resigning his post and congratulating Owen on having so good a man as Austin to succeed him.

dicted, to a day, two months before its occurrence. The manifestations consisted exclusively of raps; and Dixon remarked that there was some excuse for the suspicions—suspicions which he did not himself share—of the good faith of the medium entertained by some who were admitted to the circle, since the lower part of the boy's body was "much exercised" whilst the sounds were being made. Little opportunity was offered, however, to such sceptics, since the spirits for the first year seem rarely to have permitted any one but E—— and Dixon to share their ministrations. Later, however, Owen was permitted to attend and question the spirits.¹

In the course of the few months' sittings recorded by Dixon the raps indicated from time to time that a knife, rabbits, a goat, money (for his mother), and a gun were to be presented to the boy, Daniel Offord. All these commands were punctually fulfilled by E——, except that Robert Owen forestalled him in purchasing the gun. It is but fair to add that the spirits also issued commands—when the punishment for a serious offence committed by Dan was left to their decision—that the boy should be whipped; and that later they prescribed schooling for him. It should be added that E—— and all his household, including the medium himself and an elder sister, were originally vegetarians, but the raps ultimately prescribed a meat diet for all. It will be noted that E—— gave implicit obedience to the commands issued through the raps. In the history of English Spiritualism Dan and his master had many successors.

Of the communications from the spirits of Milton,

¹ *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Part. VI., p. xx.

Shakespeare, Benjamin Franklin, the Duke of Wellington etc., which were vouchsafed at many *séances* at this period there is no need to speak here. Much rubbish of this kind is recorded in the appendices to Parts VI and VII. of the *New Existence of Man upon Earth* published in 1855. But Owen himself was concerned not with the occupations of the Seven Spheres, or other mysteries of spiritual cosmology, but with matter of immediate practical importance—to wit, the introduction of the Social System. Thus, at what appears to have been his first sitting with Daniel Offord, he briefly records the presence of the Duke of Kent, Jefferson Franklin, Shelley, Dr. Chalmers, Elias and Daniel the prophets; and proceeds forthwith to business. The proof sheets of Part V. of the *New Existence* lay upon the table, and he asked the spirits whether they approved it; whether he should distribute it widely; whether in his lectures and meetings he should entirely denounce the Old System, and boldly advocate the immediate introduction of the New Dispensation.¹

At another *séance* he asks: "Are the Queen, Prince Albert, the King of the Belgians, the Emperor of the French, and the Emperor of Austria, the proper persons to form a Conservative party to introduce the New Dispensation?"²

Throughout Owen held his interest in Spiritualism as a revelation of a future life subordinate to its practical importance as a means of hastening the advancement of the millennium, the cause to which all his life had been devoted. Thus at the World's Convention of May, 1855, "to inaugurate the commencement of the

¹ *New Existence*, Part VI., p. xx.

² *Ibid.*, p. xvii.



By permission of Mrs. E. Holyoake Marsh.
From the print formerly in the possession of the late George Jacob Holyoake.

ROBERT OWEN.

From an engraving published by William Farquhar in 1836.

Millennium," he was so engrossed with the exposition of his system that he forgot to introduce the subject of Spiritualism. A band of American Spirits, through the mouth of J. Murray Spear, had sent an address to be read at the Convention. The address was entrusted to a famous medium, P. B. Randolph, who presented it to Owen on the day before the meeting. Owing to the stress of business the papers remained unread until after the Convention, and Owen, though at first disposed to regret the incident, recognised later that the introduction of such a subject in such a manner might have prejudiced the success of the cause which he held most at heart.

At the similar Convention, however, held in the following year, "The First Meeting of the Congress of the Reformers of the World," plans for Homes of Harmony emanating from the same spiritual source appear to have been submitted to the audience. These Homes of Harmony illustrated a new order of architecture, based upon curved lines, such as govern the conformation of trees, planets, and the human body itself. The engravings given in the *Millennial Gazette* bear some resemblance to the first rude attempts at a honeycomb made by some kinds of undeveloped bees.

Most of Owen's interrogations of the spirit world were addressed to the "Duke of Kent," who had announced his presence at one of the early sittings with Mrs. Hayden, and thereafter made regular appointments to meet Owen and give him advice on the methods to be pursued in spreading the knowledge of the New Dispensation, the persons to whom memorials should be addressed, the Members of Parliament or Royal personages who should be solicited to give their aid.

Towards the end of 1853 one of Owen's numerous correspondents, Mr. F. Hockley of Croydon, wrote to tell him of some communications which had been received from a spirit styling himself the Crowned Angel of the Seventh Sphere, in which the spirit of the Duke of Kent was denounced as an impostor masquerading under a honoured name. The Crowned Angel professed a deep interest in Owen's career, and eighteen months later addressed to him through the hand of Mr. Hockley's medium a long communication, beginning with the ordinary terrestrial formula, "My dear Mr. Owen. Owen courteously replied, subscribing his letter "To the Crowned Angel from the Seventh Sphere."¹

For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the early history of Spiritualism, it should be explained that Owen's attitude of unquestioning acceptance in the presence of these spurious marvels was by no means exceptional. There were many men and women still in the ripeness of their faculties, and far better equipped both by education and natural endowment to deal with manifestations of this kind—half imposture and half self-deception—who showed a like indiscriminate credulity. It should be remembered, moreover, that not only did the trustfulness of Owen's nature render him a ready victim to impostors, but that the wide publicity given to his aims and to the facts of his life made it an easy task for the designing medium to play up to his prejudices, and to produce information about his personal or family history.

¹ *New Existence*, Part VII., p. 53.

² I have endeavoured to trace the causes of this strange delusion in my book on *Modern Spiritualism* (2 vols). Methuen, 1902.

CHAPTER XXV

LAST DAYS

FOR many years Owen had no fixed home of his own. His income during these later years had been drawn from the fund set aside for his maintenance in 1844 by his sons, as already described,¹ which amounted to something over £300 a year. During the latter years of the forties until some time in 1853 he appears to have resided mainly at Cox's Hotel in Jermyn Street, boarding with the proprietor's family, and paying inclusive terms of 30s. a week. Mr. Cox, as shown by some accounts in the Manchester Correspondence, took charge of Owen's remittances from America, and furnished him with money in small sums as he required it. Several letters testify to the warm feelings of affection which united him to the Cox family. In the last of them, written only a few months before Owen's death, William Cox, the son, after urgently renewing advice given previously that Owen should take a little whiskey with his meals, for his health's sake, goes on to express the writer's hope that he may see more of his old friend in the future: "I feel a drawing towards you I never felt so strongly before—it is like some spirit influence

¹ Above, p. 395.

that has linked me more closely than ever to you—my Friend, my Counsellor, my Guide.”¹

But as the burden of age increased it appears to have been felt by his friends that more restful surroundings were necessary, and a home was ultimately found for him at Park Farm, Sevenoaks, where he resided with few intermissions from 1853 to his death. His later letters are dated characteristically from “Sevenoaks Park.” From about the same date James Rigby, one of the old Social Missionaries, who was at this time Secretary to the Co-operative Association, 58, Pall Mall, took charge of Owen’s business affairs, saw to the printing of his addresses and periodicals, delivered his letters and addresses to Ministers, Prince Albert, etc., and acted as his personal attendant on all his journeys.² The letters which follow will serve to illustrate the kind of service rendered by this most faithful and devoted follower.

The letter on the opposite page relates apparently to the proceedings at the World’s Convention held in the previous month.

¹ Manchester Correspondence. Letter from William Cox, June 3, 1858.

² The Manchester Collection includes about four hundred and fifty letters written by Owen to Rigby, nearly all from 1853 onwards.

7 or 9 June 1855

My dear Sir

I have been waiting to hear
from you what has been
done or doing this week in
London: how have I heard from
the Rev Mr Pore or from
his hostess. For I have
heard from the Reporter who
claims to be your emissary. I will
talk with him when I come
to town which may be some
day next week. As my
night is fast going I must
stop while it is day with
me. Some more business
must be yet
completed before my business
can be ended. I have not

Time for more this morning -
 can we opportunity
 Robert Owen

I shall wash reports of the
 lectures. have up for however
 and a lot of evening 200
 with the address upon them -
 & the usual number who be
 required - What of 2nd of June?
 I have returned -

TRANSCRIPT.

"SEVENOAKS, June 9, 1855.

"MY DEAR RIGBY,

"I have been waiting to hear from you what has been done or doing this week in London; nor have I heard from the Dr. or Mr. Pare or from Lord Montegle, but I have a letter from the reporter, who claims his three guineas. I will settle with him when I come to town, which may be some day next week, As my sight is fast going I must work while it is day

with me, and some more decisive measures must be yet accomplished before my mission will be ended. I have not time for more this morning.

“Ever yours affectionately,

“ROBERT OWEN.

“I shall want reports of the meetings made up for America, under or not exceeding 203., with the address upon them, and the usual number will be required. What of Randolph [the American medium referred to on p. 613]? Is he returned?”

“November 11, 1855.

“MY DEAR RIGBY,

“I am out of funds because my remittances from America, several weeks overdue, have not come to hand, and Misses McGowan are much in want of payment for Part 7.

“I daily expect the money from America: but in the meantime it is very inconvenient not to pay the ladies who, I doubt not, want the money to pay wages. Would B. lend me fifty pounds until the remittances arrive? I would not like to ask him if I thought it would be inconvenient to him or that he would refuse: but as his funds are intended to promote my views according to his statement—and I have expended this year more than £250 for the Public—it seems but natural that he should aid me as I have stated.

“Yours in haste,

“Affectionately,

“ROBERT OWEN.”

The next letter is one of the last written by Owen, just before the final journey from which he never returned.

York 7 Octbr 58

My Dr. Keble

You have done exactly
what I wished regarding
the Liverpool Bazaar
when opportunity occurs
call according to the
address on this paper, as
often as myself, be-
cause I am as poor as horse
& obliged to borrow to pay
my way. But if you
think a pound can do
her real good for my

my very long ago mother
promised give it to her
if you have so much on
hand. but it is scarcely
just, except in an
extreme case to lend
other peoples money
I think I have not lived
at her house for 30 years.

I have just now written
to McCoy who has been
expected here all day
but the storm has been
too severe for travelling.

I have requested him
to inform Robert who
is supposed to be here
in time, to say -

"Robert Owen come
to your father at 6 o'clock
without any delay & say when you
can be there."

(At the day, when I visited
when sent from the office
Mr Cox may have left home
before my letter would
reach the hotel at the

time but - I have
 this go on once to the
 Hotel, & ascertain how
 things stand & apply
 for usual disbursements
 Yr affec^t
 Howson

TRANSCRIPT.

"SEVENOAKS, October 7, 1858.

"MY DEAR RIGBY,

"You have done exactly what I wanted respecting the Liverpool Banquet.

"When opportunity occurs, call according to the inclosed on Miss Reynolds [?], as old as myself—tell her I am as poor as herself, and obliged to borrow to pay my way. But if you think a pound can do her real good, for my very long ago made promise give it to her, if you have so much on hand—but it is scarcely just, except in an extreme case, to lend other people's money. Tell her I have not lived at New Lanark for thirty years.

"I have just now written to Mr. Cox, who has been expected here all day, but the storm has been too severe for travelling. I have requested him to telegram Robert, who is supposed to be now in Rome, to say—'Robert Dale Owen. Come to your father at Cox Hotel, London, without an hour's delay, and say when you can be there' (with the day, hour and minute when sent from the office).

"Mr. Cox may have left home before my letter would reach the hotel, and the time lost. To learn this go at once to the hotel and ascertain how matters stand, and apply your usual discretion.

"Yours affectionately,

"R. OWEN."

Next to the Great Exhibition of 1851,¹ the event which probably most attracted Owen's interest in these closing years was the foundation of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, the first meeting of which was held at Birmingham in October, 1857. Owen was unable to attend himself, but he sent to its five sections as many papers, two of which, on Social Science and on "The Human Race governed without Punishment," were actually read at the meetings by Sir Benjamin Brodie and Matthew Davenport Hill respectively.²

But in the following year, having now completed

¹ On his birthday in 1851 he issued a "Proclamation to all who attend the World's Fair." Steps were also taken to form a committee for the distribution of a series of "Tracts for the World's Fair" written by Owen. (See *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. I. *passim*.)

² *Millennial Gazette* for November 15, 1857.

the first volume of his *Autobiography*, which appeared in the autumn of 1857, Owen determined to attend the meeting of the Association at Liverpool, and deliver in person his last message to mankind. On September 13 he writes to Rigby that he has nearly finished an important paper to be read at the meeting, and asks Rigby to make arrangements with Dr. Travis for having it "copied in a superior manner to be easily read."

"This," he adds, "I believe will be my last effort for the public, and I intend it to be the crowning one. I am full of pain, more acute, I think. . . ."

On October 8, 1858, he writes again to Rigby :

"SEVENOAKS, *October 8, 1858.*

"MY DEAR RIGBY,

"Robert Dale came here too late last night for my kindest friend¹ to allow him to disturb me, and now, half past seven o'clock a.m., it is too early for him to come, and I do not expect to see him before this must go to the morning post.

"*Rigby must be at the Banquet as associate, therefore immediately purchase an associate's ticket for the year and write for a Banquet ticket for Mr. James Rigby.*

"The funds I will supply afterwards.

"But on receipt of this letter go to Cox's Hotel, and say to Mr. Cox that I sent you to enquire about the notice to the newspapers of Robert Dale's arrival in London.

"And on your own account put into all the papers

¹ Mrs. Twort, apparently the tenant of the farm, who tended Owen, looked after his health, and sometimes acted as his amanuensis.

you can without payment, 'We have it on good authority that Mr. Robert Dale Owen, the son of Robert Owen, and late United States Minister for upwards of five years to Naples, arrived yesterday in London, and almost immediately left again for Sevenoaks to see his father, who had for some days been much indisposed and confined to his bed,' or something like it, however short. I expect to be in London on Monday and to see Robert in about one hour.

“ROBERT OWEN.”

He did actually travel down to Liverpool a few days later to attend the meeting.

“At the end of his journey to Liverpool he had to take to his bed. On the day of the meeting—the last public meeting he was destined to appear at—he ordered Mr. Rigby to dress him. His feebleness was such that the operation took two hours. He was then placed in a sedan chair, and carried to the Hall. Four policemen bore him to the platform. It is now matter of public history, how kindly Lord Brougham, as soon as he saw his old friend, took him by the arm, led him forward, and obtained a hearing for him. Then Mr. Owen, in his grand manner, proclaimed his ancient message of science, competence, and good will to the world. When he came to the conclusion of his first period, Lord Brougham, out of regard to his failing strength, terminated it. He clapped his hands, applauded his words, then said, ‘Capital, very good, can’t be better, Mr. Owen! There, that will do.’ Then in an undertone, ‘Here, Rigby, convey the old

gentleman to his bed.' He was carried back. As soon as he reached his bed he became unconscious."¹

He remained in bed for a fortnight at the Liverpool Hotel, and then resolved to make the journey to Newtown. He had to leave the train at Shrewsbury, and drive the rest of the journey, over thirty miles.

"When he came to the border line which separates England and Wales, he knew it again. It was more than seventy years since he passed over it. He raised himself up in his carriage, and gave a cheer. He was in his own native land once more. It was the last cheer the old man ever gave."²

On the way he passed the house of an old friend, and drove up to ask if Dr. Johns was at home. Dr. Johns had been dead twenty years. But his daughter still lived there, and welcomed her father's old friend, brought him into the house, and gave him some plummary, the dish of his choice. Then he drove to the "Bear Hotel" at Newtown, entering himself under the name of Oliver, and went to the house of his birth two doors off to buy some notepaper. The shopkeeper, Mr. David Thomas, seems to have guessed his customer's identity, and Owen shook hands with him silently. Then he drove straight back to Shrewsbury. From Shrewsbury he wrote to Mr. Thomas, asking him to summon a public meeting at Newtown and promising to return in order to address it. He did in fact return a few days later, and took up his abode at the "Bear Hotel." Rigby returned to London

¹ *Life and Last Days of Robert Owen*, by G. J. Holyoake, 1859, p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

to fetch Robert Dale, and Owen remained alone in the care of Dr. Slyman. Though now reduced to great feebleness he refused, Holyoake tells us, to take any stimulants. On the afternoon of November 16 Owen had an interview with the Rector of Newtown, at which he made arrangements for holding a series of meetings in the town, and sketched out a plan for reorganising the education of the parish.¹

Robert Dale Owen came down from London on the same day and watched by the bedside. That night at half-past one (*i.e.* 1.30 a.m. on the 17th), the dying man called out to ask the time, and was answered. "He did not distinctly hear it, and supposed the reply to be half-past two. His eyes were dim then, but fearing his attendants might suffer from loss of rest, he avowed himself to be in no want of anything, and desired them to retire. Of course they were always at hand, and when an hour after he again asked the time, he was answered half-past two. At the end of a similar period he made a renewed enquiry as to the time, and on being told it was half-past three, his sense of hearing being low, he evidently understood the reply to be half-past two, and he said in his usual smiling way, 'Why, it has been half-past two these three hours.' He thought some friendly imposition was being practised upon him, and he showed his perfect possession of his mind by quietly rebuking it."²

A few hours later he passed away, as described in the following letter from his son, who stood at the bedside holding his hand till the last.

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 68.

² *Life and Last Days* p. 10.



Photo by permission of Mr. John Owen, Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

ROBERT OWEN'S GRAVE IN 1860.
Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

"NEWTOWN, MONTGOMERYSHIRE.

"November 17th, 1858.

"It is all over. My dear father passed away this morning, at a quarter before seven, and passed away gently and quietly as if he had been falling asleep. There was not the least struggle, not a contraction of limb, or a muscle, not an expression of pain on his face. His breathing gradually became slower and slower, until at last it ceased so imperceptibly, that, even as I held his hand, I could scarcely tell the moment when he no longer breathed. His last words, distinctly pronounced about twenty minutes before his death, were 'Relief has come.' About half-an-hour before, he said, 'Very easy and comfortable.' "

The body was removed from the hotel into the house of his birth, and from thence was carried on the 21st of November to the new church, and then to the grave in the old churchyard, next to the ruined church, of which parts of the outer walls now alone remained. There, in accordance with his own request, he was placed in the grave, next to his parents.

Besides Rigby and Robert Dale Owen, there were present at the funeral several of his chief disciples from London—Holyoake, Truelove, W. Pare, Thomas Allsop, W. Cox, W. H. Ashurst and others. Some of these would have preferred a burial without the ceremonies of the Church, but Owen's wish to be buried near his parents, in consecrated ground, made this impracticable.

In 1902, as the result of a subscription amongst the co-operators of the United Kingdom, a handsome

iron railing was placed round the tomb, bearing a sentence from Owen's own teachings,—“It is the one great and universal interest of the human race to be cordially united, and to aid each other to the full extent of their capacities.”

Attached to the front of the railings is a bronze bas-relief showing Robert Owen, with the veiled figure of Justice behind him, holding out his hand to a long procession of workers, a weaver stooping beneath the weight of the warp which he bears on his shoulders, a potter carrying a large jar, field labourers with scythes, a carpenter with his bag of tools, a woman bent down to the earth.

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION

ROBERT OWEN was not a handsome man. There can, I think, be little doubt that the portrait which forms the frontispiece to the first volume fairly represents Owen's features in early middle life, as they must have appeared to a not specially sympathetic observer.¹ With advancing years it is probable that the rugged lines of the face were somewhat softened; the superior comeliness of the portraits by Brooke and Farquhar is perhaps not wholly due to the painters' desire to supply the deficiencies of nature. But of his frank ugliness, at any rate in middle life, there can be no doubt. Owen himself tells us that he was on more than one occasion mistaken for Crougham; and the statement, to those who know the political caricatures of the first half of the last century, will scarcely need comment. An old friend of mine, the niece of that Charles Southwell who was one of Owen's most judicious followers in the period from 1830 to 1845, frequently during her early childhood saw Owen at her mother's house, and can still recall how his appearance repelled her. Owen's granddaughter, Mrs. Templeton,

¹ Compare this portrait with the portrait reproduced from *The Crisis* (vol. i. p. 376 of the present volume), which was issued under Owen's own authority, and was therefore presumably considered by him as a faithful likeness.

has told me that on one occasion, when she was waiting at a railway station near New Harmony, an old man approached and asked her whether she was not an Owen. On her explaining her relationship to Robert Owen, the other replied, "I knew your grandfather well—he was the ugliest man I ever saw." Again, on another occasion Miss Owen was travelling in the neighbourhood of New Harmony in a coach, which stuck in the mud. A farmer chanced to come by with his waggon and team. Glancing into the coach he noticed my informant, and said, "That is an Owen in that corner, I can tell by the nose: I am going to get her out"—and he hitched his team on. So that Mrs. Templeton, as she says, was pulled out of the mud by her nose. The nose is a prominent feature in the only other member of the Owen family whom I have met.

And it must be added that in general society Owen could be a bore of the first magnitude. He was conscious of a message to deliver to mankind, and in the business of its delivery he recognised no limitation of place or season, and no distinction of persons. Here is a hasty sketch of him from the pen of Macaulay. The occasion is a fancy dress ball at the house of a wealthy Jew:

"There were . . . and Owen the philanthropist. Owen laid hold on Sheil, and gave him a lecture on co-operation which lasted half an hour. At last Sheil made his escape. Then Owen seized on Mrs. Sheil, a good Catholic and a very agreeable woman, and began to prove to her that there could be no such thing as moral responsibility. I had fled at the first sound of his discourse."¹ But Macaulay, it may be surmised, was

¹ *Life of Macaulay*, by Trevelyan, Vol. I., p. 220. Letter of August 6, 1831.

scarcely a sympathetic recorder. Despite his indifference to social conventions, Owen throughout his life won the respect of all, and the sympathy and sincere affection or love of those who came in contact with him. We have already seen the impression produced on Mrs. Trollope by Owen's share in that strenuous entertainment at Cincinnati in 1829—an impression in no way attributable to the seductiveness of his dialectic or the charm of his eloquence. Again, Miss Martineau, writing at about the same time as Macaulay, gives another and a kindlier view of his social qualifications.

“Mr. Owen was presently at my ear, laying down the law in the way which he calls ‘proof,’ and really interesting me by his candour and cheerfulness, his benevolence and charming manners, which would make him the most popular man in England, if he could not distinguish between assertion and argument, and refrain from wearying his friends with his monotonous doctrines.

“Having this strong hope of Prince Metternich for convert, he might well have hopes of me . . . for many months my pleasant visitor had that hope of me ; and when he was obliged to give it up, it was with a kindly sigh. He was sure that I desired to perceive the truth, but I had got unfortunately bewildered.”

Miss Martineau adds that she sees in the times some signs of an impending industrial revolution : “If that could happen, it ought to be remembered that Robert Owen was the sole apostle of the principle in England at the beginning of our century. Now that the Economy Association is a fact acknowledged by some of our

most important recent institutions . . . every one would willingly assign his due share of honour to Robert Owen, but for his unfortunate persistence in his other characteristic doctrine, that man is the creature of circumstance (meaning literally surroundings).

“His certainty that we might make life a Heaven, and his hallucination that we are going to do so immediately under his guidance, have caused his wisdom to be overlooked in his absurdity. . . . I own I became weary of him, while ashamed, every time I witnessed his fine temper and manners, of having felt so.”

Miss Martineau adds that she asked Owen to read the four Gospels, which he undertook to do, if she for her part would read Hamlet as a lesson in Necessitarianism. Each no doubt carried out the compact. “But Robert Owen,” Miss Martineau adds, “is not the man to think differently of a book for having read it, and that from no want of candour, but simply from more than the usual human inability to see more than what he has made up his mind to see.¹”

But Miss Martineau was only one of many who, without any special sympathy with Owen's plans for the regeneration of the world, were drawn into terms of affectionate intimacy with him by the magnetism of his personal character. Chief among these, as shown by the Manchester Correspondence, were Lord Brougham, Francis Place, and, among his Irish friends, Lord Cloncurry and Lord and Lady Torrington, who kept up their correspondence with him almost until his death. Owen was godfather to one of Lady Torrington's children. Again, though the columns of the *Times* had been

¹ Miss Martineau, *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 231, 233, anno 1833.

practically closed to him since the meetings of 1817, he remained on terms of personal friendship with the editor, T. Barnes. The correspondence contains occasional invitations to dinner, and a cordial letter from Mrs. Barnes regretting that Owen cannot come until late the following Sunday, as it is her birthday and she wants to see her "real friends." This was in 1830.

Leigh Hunt and James Martineau were also included amongst Owen's outside friends. Here is a characteristic letter from the former :

"18, ELM-TREE ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,
"REGENT'S PARK, *September 26, 1831.*

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Allow me to introduce to you, or rather re-introduce, Mrs. Hunt, (for she once had the honour of receiving you at dinner). She comes to ask you two favours, one for herself and one for me—being, you must know (to speak Hibernically), my man of business, a character which *you* will not quarrel with a woman, provided she knows how to unite it with kindness and liberality. Believe me, ever, my dear sir, with the greatest respect, your affectionate servant,

"LEIGH HUNT."

But in those who accepted Owen not merely as a friend, but as a prophet, the feelings which he inspired went far beyond ordinary affection. Thus Finch, writing from Queenwood on "23, 5 Mo., Year I New Moral World" (February 23, 1840), begins his letter "Revered and Honoured Father." T. Allsop subscribes himself "Yours with reverence and affection"; others address him as "My dear Social Father," "Very much

revered Father," "Venerable and Illustrious Father." After Owen's visit to Paris in 1848, a friend writes to him, "The young man . . . is very desirous you would write him a few lines, that he might have some of your handwriting, which he will keep as good Catholics do the relics of their saints."¹

Here, again, is an address from the Socialists at Cincinnati on the occasion of Owen's visit to the United States in 1844.

"REVERED AND MUCH HONOURED FATHER,

"We, the undersigned, your disciples and children, do beg leave most respectfully to write a few lines to you, expressive of our filial affection and happiness at your once more visiting this country.

"Some of us regret much at your short stay in this city in not being enabled to see you at your late visit. Most happy should we have been once more to take by the hand a man to whom we owe so much; for we most unqualifiedly declare that whatever little amount of real knowledge we do possess is entirely owing to thy divine teachings—a debt which we shall never be able to repay.

"Neither is this the language of vain adulation, for the disciples of Robert Owen can never be guilty of such, but it is in the spirit of truth and eternal justice so oft inculcated by yourself, that we thus bear testimony to these our sentiments. Verily we may well say that 'a greater than John the Baptist is now in our midst.'"

And like feelings endure amongst his disciples to this

¹ Letter from S. Andreae, September 29, 1848.

say. Mrs. Templeton tells me that when, as Rosamond Dale Owen, she first lectured in London in the eighties, she met with many proofs of the depth of the feelings inspired by her grandfather. Old men would come up to her with tears in their eyes, and tears running down their cheeks, to talk about Robert Owen, and to testify how their whole lives had been changed by seeing him and hearing him speak. One of her auditors kept ejaculating throughout her lecture, "God bless you! God bless you!" and followed her afterwards to her cab with "God bless you!"—because she reminded him of the teacher to whom he owed so much.¹

The secret of the extraordinary influence exercised by Owen not only on those who came into direct contact with him, but over the whole generation of his contemporaries, is to be found in his personal character. Robert Owen was a man without guile. He was also without malice. It was the union in him, in a supreme degree, of these two qualities, simplicity and goodwill, which explains his influence. Here is Brougham's testimony to Owen's character, given in the course of the debate in the House of Commons on December 16, 1819. "He had the highest respect and esteem for Mr. Owen, whom he really believed one of the most humane, simple-minded, amiable men on earth. He was indeed a rare character; for although a projector, Mr. Owen was one of the most calm and candid men he had ever conversed with. You might discuss his

¹ I offered to buy the last six volumes of the *New Moral World* from one who had been in his youth a member of the Choir at the John Street Institution. But he insisted on giving them to me as a free gift. I think it would have seemed to him a sacrilege to barter his Master's writings for money.

theories in any terms you pleased—you might dispose of his arguments just as you thought proper, and he listened with the utmost mildness. His nature perfectly free from any gall, he had none of the feverish irritable feelings which too generally belong to projectors." Brougham does not assert, however, that Owen was convinced by his opponents' criticisms.

An old friend remarked to his son that if Robert Owen had had in his nursery seven thousand children instead of seven, there would have been love enough to go round.¹ And the stream flowed on inexhaustible until the end. Owen's life was one long protest against the poverty and unhappiness—needless poverty and unhappiness as he conceived it—which he saw around him. His hand and heart were always open; he seems rarely to have turned a deaf ear to any appeal. Throughout his life he was the recipient of innumerable begging-letters. That is no doubt the fate of all men who come prominently before the public. What is noteworthy is that Owen did not put these appeals into the waste-paper basket, but carefully preserved and apparently answered them, in some cases at any rate sending the help asked for.²

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 66.

² Here are some samples: G. Hands has invented a machine for preventing shipwreck, and would like to patent it; Brown wants to establish a claim to the peerage; R. O. Davies—a nephew—would like £300 to enable him to take a small farm; a shoemaker, who has been giving lectures on astronomy in public-houses, would like to buy a van, and travel round the country lecturing; J. Westbrook writes, in 1831, that he has invented a machine for receiving, recording and registering votes at elections, all in secret and without human aid; another man would like £50 or £60 to furnish a small cottage, and would be obliged if Owen could also find a publisher for two manuscript volumes of poems; Francis Maccrone has discovered the art of flying, and wants £100 for two months, etc., etc.

By permission of the sculptor, Mr. Albert Toft.

A BRONZE PLAGUE, SYMBOLICAL OF THE LIFE OF ROBERT OWEN.

From the grave at Newtown, Montgomeryshire.



There are letters also asking for advice and for help not of a pecuniary kind. A young law-student writes from Lincoln's Inn Library that he has been convinced by hearing Owen's lectures and reading his writings, and will straightway renounce his profession and his social privileges and cease to read for the Bar. He offers himself to do the humblest service which would assist in carrying out the glorious scheme which Owen has outlined. There are many similar appeals from young men in poorer circumstances, all obviously inspired by genuine enthusiasm for the Cause, and devotion for its prophet. One of the quaintest personal appeals is from Joseph Smith of Salford—afterwards a prominent social missionary. He writes to Owen as "My very dear Father," and begs him to use his great influence to bring about a reconciliation between the unhappy suppliant and the young woman of his choice, else insanity or suicide await him. Owen must have replied promptly to this letter, for a few days later Joseph Smith writes to explain that all is well; they have met and made it up. He asks Owen not to mention the incident if he should happen to meet the young lady, and signs himself "Your dutiful and grateful and now happy son."

In fact Owen carried out visibly in his life the religion which he preached: "pure and genuine religion, which never did and never will consist in unmeaning phrases, forms and ceremonies, but in the daily undeviating practice, in thought, word and action, of charity, benevolence and kindness to every human being with whom we come into communication, or have any transactions near or remote. Now this and this alone is

true religion; and true, because it will lead to the greatest happiness that man can enjoy.”¹

This uniform goodwill to all showed itself in all his public utterances and in the very structure of his thought. There is no place found in him for scorn or indignation. He cannot bring himself to speak or think evil of any man. He carried out in his daily life his own teaching that man is not the proper subject of praise or blame.² Throughout his numerous works there is hardly a sentence of denunciation—of personal denunciation never. He loves the sinner and can scarcely bring himself to hate the sin.³

But this picture needs some shadows to give it the semblance of life. Robert Owen's character did not consist of benevolence unalloyed. But the defects were closely bound up with the qualities. His mind, so far as we can judge from the records, was one of singular innocence. Further, from the day when he left his father's house at ten years of age, his life had been one unbroken career of success. There had been no room for struggle within or without. He had no natural propensity to vice or excess and no external temptation had presented itself. By the accident of

¹ Second Lecture at Washington. *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 249.

² And he succeeded in inducing some of his disciples to practise the same virtue. Witness this extract from a letter written by Rigby in May of the fateful year 1848:

“Had you not taught me that Man does not make himself what he is I should say that our Government was deserving of condemnation, having the means in ample abundance to remove Poverty and ignorance from our land, and yet allowing day after day the real producers of all wealth to sink deeper and deeper into distress.”

³ The *Lectures on Marriage* form an exception to his other writings in this respect. But even here the invective is purely impersonal.

he time and for no better reason than that he was honest, sober, industrious and intelligent, he had risen step by step to fame and fortune. He had never known failure—for his dreams never admitted defeat—and hence he had never learnt humility. And this defect runs throughout his character. He was the least teachable of men. From the time when he first emerged into public life Owen learnt nothing and forgot nothing. We have seen that Miss Martineau declared that Owen was not the man to think differently of a book for having read it. So many instances of his extraordinary self-complacency and of his autocratic action have already been given in the course of this work, that it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the subject. The respect inspired by his character—a respect increased by the fact that he stood to his followers generally in the position of a rich man dealing with poor men, a well-bred man with men ignorant and uncultured—served for the most part to reconcile his subjects to this despotism, which, however perverse on occasion, was always without alloy of personal interest. But there are letters amongst the Manchester Correspondence which indicate that Owen's unteachableness and arrogance must have constantly tended to alienate and even to embitter against him men of independent character who came under his influence.¹

And if Owen's want of humility and all that

¹ Thus G. Mudie, the founder of the London Co-operative and Economical Society, writes in August, 1848—"I had at one time almost idolised you—but I was not a blind worshipper" (he then complains that Owen had neglected and ignored him because) "I had been guilty of treason against your autocracy by questioning your views on spade husbandry."

followed from this defect tended constantly to diminish his personal influence, it reacted still more disastrously as we shall see later, on his philosophy, or, as it would more accurately be described, his system of ethics.

I have referred to Owen's commercial success as due to the accident of the time. It is true that he enjoyed amongst his contemporaries the reputation of being a good man of business. He had shown indefatigable industry, a ready intelligence, a love of order both in the physical and in the moral world. Above all he possessed the power of making his subordinate work, not by coercion, but by the love and trust which he inspired in them. But these qualities were no doubt sufficient, in an age when capital had an extraordinary monopoly value, and when enterprising manufacturers were making with ease 20 per cent. and more on their capital, to explain his commercial success at New Lanark. In fact the margin of profit was so wide that we need scarcely look for any other explanation of Owen's success as a manufacturer. Certainly in later life he gave no indication of possessing the qualities commonly connoted at the present day by the phrase "a good man of business." It is obvious from his evidence before the Committee of 1816 that, in shortening the hours of labour at his mills, he had paid no serious attention to the effect of the measure upon the output. Again, his argument based on Falla's experiments in spade husbandry reveals an almost childish incapacity to appreciate the factors in the problem. And throughout his later career, though he clearly possessed some degree of organising power, and could in a quite uncommon degree inspire men to

work under his direction, he shows no grasp of the principles of finance. His Equitable Labour Exchange, his very scheme of a Communist Village, betray complete ignorance, or indifference, to the financial aspects of the case. In his dealings with Bromley, the landlord of the Gray's Inn Road Institution, in the conduct of his other enterprises, including the various periodicals which were run under his direction, in his own private affairs, we find a complete disregard of commercial principles, a fine recklessness about money and money's worth. He acted indeed as though himself fully persuaded of the doctrine which he was constantly enforcing on others—that money was merely the clumsy expedient of an imperfect social system, which would be dispensed with as soon as the new order was introduced, when each man, having enough and to spare of all good things, would find no need to traffic with his neighbour.

Such was his carelessness in money matters, indeed, that on more than one occasion he was accused—and not, it would seem, without some superficial justification—of actual dishonesty in his dealings. The most serious of these accusations was made in regard to his dealings with the estates of his wife's sisters, for whom he was trustee under David Dale's will. To those who realise Owen's character it must appear superfluous to defend him from the charge of appropriating any part of the money for his personal gain; but it seems not at all improbable that he may have persuaded the Misses Dale to allow some of their money to be used for the advancement of the millennium in one form or another. And he inspired in his

children an indifference to money fully equal to his own, as may be inferred from the readiness which was shown by his sons, themselves not wealthy, to place their fortunes at his disposal.

Clearly Owen was not, by the modern standard, a good man of business. His constant preoccupation with the larger ends of life, his childlike trust in the honour and goodwill of all with whom he had dealings, his very experience as a manufacturer dealing with undertakings in which the margin of profit was in those days indefinitely elastic, made it impossible for him to engage in the nice calculation of more or less, the exact adjustment of means to ends, the vigilant weighing, measuring and reckoning of small things, which are essential to the conduct of business in the modern sense.

But if Owen was not a typical captain of industry, neither was he, in his later life, at any rate, to be classed as a social reformer. His work at New Lanark no doubt furnished a conspicuous illustration of reforms prudently initiated and patiently conducted to a successful issue. And even though he was building on another man's foundation, and it is doubtful how far originality can be claimed for any of the measures introduced, it was his unfailing goodwill and his inexhaustible faith in human nature which furnished the driving force.

But apart from the results achieved at New Lanark, there is no definite improvement in the social organisation to which we can point as having been devised and directly carried into effect by Owen. He gave, no doubt, the first impulse to factory legislation; but he soon grew impatient, as he himself has told us, of the

long-drawn-out struggle for Parliamentary action, and left the conduct of the fight to others. His other schemes—the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, the Equitable Labour Exchanges, the Villages of Co-operation and Equality—did not even begin to be practical. To discuss them seriously from the standpoint of mundane economics would be as futile as the attempt to appraise the value of soapbubbles as building material. In fact Owen was so dazzled by the splendour of his aims that he was never able to contemplate steadily the means necessary for their achievement. Like Browning's Paracelsus, he might have said :

I saw no use in the past.

A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand self sufficient even now.

I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition.

Owen, then, was in fact neither reformer nor captain of industry, though in his lifetime he passed for both. His claim on our remembrance is of a quite different kind. He was a prophet. He saw far off the vision of a heaven on earth, and he never ceased, in season and out of season, to proclaim the happiness which he saw waiting for mankind. He was of those who "entonnent le cantique de l'avenir, et, présageant la ruine des cités maudites, chantent les splendeurs de la Jérusalem nouvelle."¹

¹ Reybaud, *Études sur les Réformateurs*, third edition, Paris, 1842 (p. 249). The Reformers dealt with are S. Simon, Fourier and Owen. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say that Owen owed little to S. Simon

No one who has followed the course of his life can deny the reality of that vision, the unconquerable faith which it inspired. The disaster on disaster which overwhelmed one after another of his schemes for social salvation were to Owen but the momentary falling back of the waves as the tide flows up the beach ; his dreams, because they were dreams, never knew defeat. To Owen, as to all prophets, his vision seemed the one reality ; not merely was it true, but it was Truth itself. The imperturbable demeanour under criticism, which Brougham described in a passage already quoted, came not from an open mind, but from the most absolute self-confidence. Owen knew that he was right, and that those who differed from him differed only because they could not or would not understand. And if the New Jerusalem which he saw found its embodiment in a rather ridiculous quadrangle, it must be remembered that his vision was limited—as Owen himself would have reminded us in any other case than his own—by his nature, his personal experience, his environment, the whole circumstances of the time. He was a prophet of the tradition of Rousseau ; his gospel, the essential goodness of human nature. All wrong, all crime and suffering proceeded from the governments and other circumstances created by the perversity of man in the past. Let those governments be abolished, those circumstances re-created, give the natural instincts full play,

and nothing to Fourier. The latter's *Traité de l'Association domestique* did not come out until 1822 ; and he did not succeed until ten years later in establishing a periodical to represent his views. On the other hand, the Fourierite movement, especially in America, owed a good deal to Owen ; and Cabet, the founder of Icaria, was a friend, and, it may be said, a disciple of Owen's.

and man would rise to his full stature and perfection. Happily, there was none to hinder. Reason showed us the way : man had but to will, and it was done.

Such was the gospel, a gospel widely spread in the England of Owen's time by his master, Godwin, and by his friend and fellow-pupil Shelley.¹

"Cet appel à la raison et ce retour aux lois de nature, cette croyance à la possibilité d'une transformation immédiate et de toutes pièces de la nature humaine et de la société, par l'application quasi-automatique d'un système, sont bien les traits qui caractérisent la pensée du temps. La même idée d'une simple réfection de la machine sociale, réfection suffisante pour réaliser le paradis sur la terre, se retrouve chez tous les entrepreneurs de reconstruction sociale, chez tous les philosophes sociaux de cette époque. L'origine de tous romans sociaux, imaginés par des hommes qui se piquaient d'athéisme et de matérialisme, est dans une conception chrétienne qui s'est laïcisée . . . la culture de la vertu se fait mieux aux champs qu'à la ville. Dans l'imagination des philosophes sociaux, la représentation physique et morale de cet état de nature d'origine chrétienne se modèle sur le jardin du paradis terrestre, et l'innocence des premiers jours de la création."²

Owen, as is the wont of disciples, set forth the ideas of his masters more nakedly and crudely than they could have ventured to do. And it is easier, therefore, to see the fallacies involved in the system. It is not

¹ I can find no mention in Owen's earlier writings of his acquaintance with Shelley, but when the spirit of the poet addressed him through the mouth of a medium in his later years Owen greeted him as "my old friend Shelley."

² *Robert Owen*, by Édouard Dolléans, pp. 25, 37. Paris, 1905.

necessary to ask how far Owen was justified in teaching that circumstances create character—to enter into the age-long discussion of Freewill and Fate. Owen at any rate recognised certain facts in human nature which were generally ignored in his day by the Churches and by persons in authority. And though he assigned too exclusive importance to them, his insistence on their recognition was at the time unquestionably serviceable. But even as an exposition of Determinism his system was, of course, defective. It took account only of post-natal circumstances. He practically ignored what Christianity calls “original sin” and modern science knows as “inherited tendencies.” This one-sided view was of course part of the tradition which he inherited from eighteenth-century France. But it was confirmed in Owen by his personal experience of a life without struggle or failure. This blindness to essential factors in the problem throws all Owen’s system out of perspective. We are conscious, in reading his later utterances, of a sense of unreality, which at first bewilders, and finally exasperates beyond endurance. Of course this dealing with abstractions was in a measure common to the time. The industrious communist was not perhaps a more visionary figure than the economic man. There were, no doubt, economic men ; they gave evidence before the Factory Committee of 1816. And there were industrious communists—at Amana and Economy and, before Owen arrived on the scene, on the banks of the Wabash. But neither figure can, happily, be taken as typical. And in Owen’s case it is clear that he simply projected his own likeness on the world.

Thus Owen’s system left out more than one-half

of life. We have seen that among the Social Hymns none were found to celebrate the sterner virtues—justice, fortitude, chastity, reverence. Under the Social System there would be, Owen and his followers held, no room for such virtues, no need for struggle and endurance, for heroism and fruitless self-surrender ; but also no wide horizons, no insatiable hope or celestial ardours. To eat and drink and be clothed, and therewithal to be content—such is the Paradise to which he invites us.

“ M. Owen appelle cela le système de la Nature : de la Nature, soit ; mais alors d’une Nature polaire, car ce système n’est rien moins que l’engourdissement complet de l’humanité. Non, il n’en est pas ainsi ; non, l’humanité n’est point cette mer immobile et glaciale que ne visite jamais le soleil, mais bien cet océan capricieux et profond qu’animent des brises harmonieuses, et qui réfléchit dans son miroir les teintes changeantes du ciel.”¹

Of the theoretical absurdity of Owen’s view, that man, the creature of circumstances, could himself re-create those circumstances, it is not necessary to say much. Amongst his correspondence are some letters from an enthusiastic Scotchman, who had invented a machine which would supply “ almost illimitable motive-power,” without consumption of fuel. His appeal to Owen for assistance hit the mark ; for did not Owen, too, claim to have discovered a source of almost illimitable motive-power in the moral world, which would work its marvels without cost of human effort.

The time has not yet come to measure the effect

¹ Reybaud, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

which Owen produced on his own generation and those which have succeeded. The great educational experiment at New Lanark no doubt had a far-reaching influence for good, not from any reasoned system of education propounded by Owen, for, as already said, he had none but from the force of his example. As we have seen in a previous chapter, statesmen, reformers and philanthropists journeyed to New Lanark from the ends of the earth, and carried back with them to their own countries the report of what they had seen. It is not necessary to endorse Owen's own claim (for which I can find no evidence) that the system of State education inaugurated in Prussia in the early years of the century was modelled on that of New Lanark. The infant schools founded in London from 1820 onward were admittedly based on that model. And in other quarters the force of his example had without doubt a real influence in spreading more rational ideas on education though an influence so diffused that we cannot now point to any outstanding instance of it.

Again, at a time when factory operatives were treated with less consideration than slaves, because as Owen pointed out, the owner had, and the employer had not, a pecuniary interest in the health of those who worked for him, New Lanark was a magnificent demonstration that a manufacturer could afford to treat the instruments of his wealth as human beings, and yet not be appreciably the poorer for his humanity.

New Lanark was, indeed, Owen's greatest object-lesson ; and it is, as Reybaud says, a title to fame which the most illustrious of mankind might envy him.



By permission of the sculptor, Mr. Albert Toft.

ROBERT OWEN.

From the medallion on the grave.

Again, Owen's views on criminal reform, far in advance of his own time, are being gradually adopted in ours ; and something of the change in public opinion on this point must be attributed to Owen's teaching, and especially to his denunciation, in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, of the treatment meted out to the unhappy offenders whom he had seen in Newgate prison.

But Owen's influence with the educated classes began to wane after 1816, and by the time he returned from America in 1829 he had almost entirely lost his hold on his original audience. Henceforth, in Sargant's words, he no longer appealed to the respectable classes. But in proportion as he lost his influence on the classes, his influence over the masses was constantly increasing. His object-lessons, indeed, were no longer on so large a scale, and no longer conducted with such obvious and immediate success as in his cotton-mills at New Lanark. Nor did he any more than before win his hearers by the exposition of a logical creed. Owen's "system" was, in fact, quite unsystematic. It was not a coherent body of doctrine ; it had no true philosophic or economic basis. The scientific creed of Socialism was elaborated by others—Thompson, Gray, Hodgskin, and the rest. Owen's Socialism, like his life, was founded on benevolence. Its solitary economic premiss was that with proper management there was enough and to spare ; its artless conclusion—Why then shouldn't we all be happy ? There was no serious analysis of the existing mechanism of society ; no reconciliation of demand and supply ; no joining issue with Malthus ; no recognition or refutation of "the

iron law of wages" ; no question even of justice or of natural rights.

A creed so nebulous in its principles, which became precise only when it descended upon puerile and meticulous details in the arrangement of his quadrangular Communities, was not calculated to win, or having won, to retain, a compact body of disciples. Nevertheless, in the great years from 1830 to 1845 Owen exercised an enormous influence on the democratic movements of his day ; though perhaps not one in a hundred of those who came under his spell remained a professed disciple. His reputation—a reputation too little deserved—as a capable man of business ; the fortune which he had amassed so easily and which he held so cheaply ; his extraordinary generosity ; his invincible conviction that all things worked together for good—if only human perversity would not hinder—all these things drew men to him, and inspired even when they failed to persuade. So that though his disciples were constantly deserting his standard to throw themselves into other causes, and though the Societies which owed their foundation to him failed to carry out his ideas and were continually developing on lines inconsistent with his teachings, the results actually achieved, results not foreseen by him, were still largely due to the influence of his character and example.

Thus Lovett, Hetherington, Cleave and other co-operators became Chartists ; thus the British Association for the Promotion of Co-operative Knowledge developed into the National Union of the Working Classes ; thus the Co-operative Productive Societies of 1830 by a natural evolution became the Trade Unions of 1834.

The effect of Owen's character and teaching remained long after the external bonds of union had been broken. In 1839 a writer, in describing the views of the working classes in this country, after explaining that they ascribe their low wages to competition itself; that they think low wages inevitable so long as a distinction is maintained between labourer and capitalist, proceeds:—"These notions are, in fact, Owenism; and Owenism, as those are aware who habitually watch the progress of opinion, is at present, in one form or another, the actual creed of a great proportion of the working classes. But Owenism does not necessarily, it does not in the mind of its benevolent founder, imply any war against property. What is hoped for is not violently to subvert but quietly to supersede the present arrangements for the employment of capital and labour."¹

And when a few years later the disaster of Queenwood had taught the faithful remnant that the millennium was not yet, and the Owenite tradition seemed for a time hopelessly discredited, even then his spirit found new embodiment in two of the great democratic movements of the latter half of the last century—Secularism and Co-operation.

If we are to sum up Owen's life-work in a sentence, we must claim for him, I think, that he was the arch-heretic—Athanasius almost against the world—to the economic orthodoxy of his day, the gospel according to Ricardo and the men of Manchester. He found his contemporaries obsessed by a nightmare; and if he sought to replace it by a dream, the dream was at least

¹ *London and Westminster Review*, April, 1839. Article on Re-organisation of the Reform Party,

generous and human. There are some who advance step by step, who build by laying stone to stone. There are others who guide their feet by the stars, and dwell in houses not made with hands :

One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown ;
And three with a new song's measure
Shall trample an empire down.

We in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself with our mirth ;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth ;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Robert Owen did not rise to the highest. He may seem to have received but a slender portion of the divine fire. Doubtless each age has the prophets whom it deserves. He rose, at any rate, above the level of the men whom he addressed. He saw things which were hidden from their eyes, which are perhaps not fully discovered to ours. And when a later generation shall pronounce impartial judgment upon the men and the forces which worked for righteousness in the nineteenth century, a place will be found for Robert Owen amongst those whose dreams have helped to reshape the world.

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